WITH THE TURKS IN TRIPOLI

ERNEST N. BENNETT

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WITH THE TURKS IN TRIPOLI

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BEING SOME EXPERIENCES IN THE TURCO-ITALIAN WAR OF 1911

BY

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WITH FOUR MAPS

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PREFACE

THE bulk of this simple narrative was written as I lay prone beneath my little *tente d'abri*, amid the grunting of camels, the chattering of men, and all the varied noises of an Arab camp. Sometimes I have had to write at odd moments during long marches and many hours spent in the saddle. Owing to attacks of fever after leaving Tripoli my time has been further curtailed, and I have not been able even to revise the proofs. This little volume, therefore, can make no pretensions to any literary value. If it gives my indulgent readers any fresh insight into the difficulties, successes, and prospects of a small but gallant army struggling for the right, I shall be satisfied.

My own personal experience did not of course extend beyond the Turkish lines and towns held by Turkish garrisons; and, as the

war is still in progress, I feel that I cannot in honour reveal anything as to the disposition, numbers, or plans of the Ottoman forces which I could not have included in a letter from the front. For information as to what was happening down below in the region of the searchlights I am largely indebted to odd copies of the "Temps" and such other papers as reached me, and to the Editors of these journals I express my acknowledgments. At the same time I may add that the Turkish headquarters are by no means wholly in the dark as to happenings outside their own special sphere of operations.

E. N. B.

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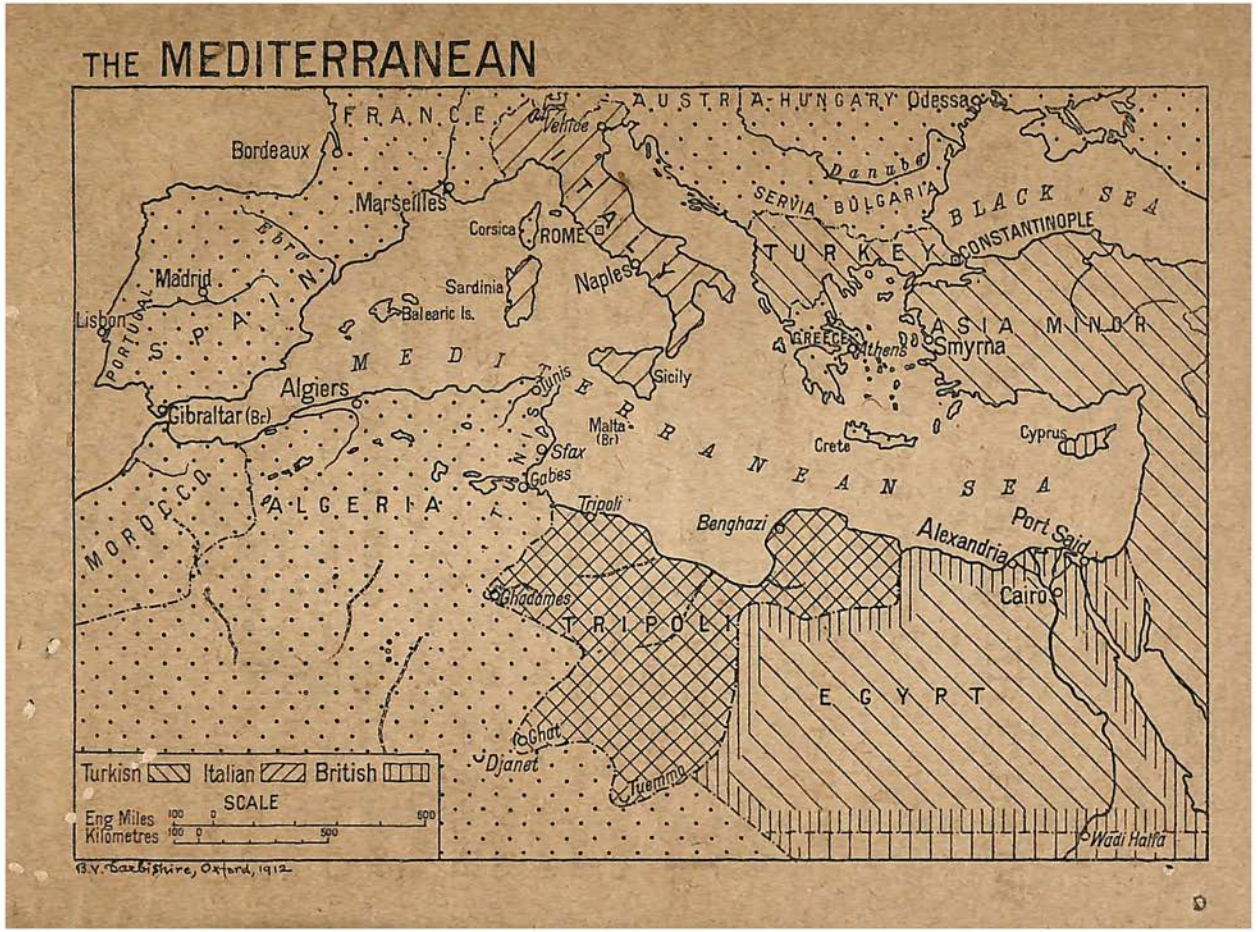
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WITH THE TURKS IN TRIPOLI

CHAPTER I

SOME PRESENT FACTS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

IT is impossible within the limits of these pages to deal at any length with the causes of the present war; but it is evident that ever since the French occupation of Tunis in 1881 Italy has regarded herself as the ultimate possessor of the vilayet of Tripoli. Bitterly disappointed at seeing the Republic in absolute control of a province where Italian settlers greatly outnumbered the French, Crispi set himself to secure the definite reversion of Tripoli, and had his Ministry lasted a few more months the present enterprise would in all probability have been anticipated some twenty years ago.

As early as 1857, in the course of an interview at Osborne between Napoleon III and

the Prince Consort, the French monarch suggested that "a part of Tripoli might be given to Sardinia." Later on, when Crispi's opportunity came, he strove hard to secure the recognition and acceptance amongst the Powers of his country's pretensions with respect to the Turkish province. The unopposed declaration of a French protectorate over the "occupied" Tunis accentuated Crispi's dread lest the Republic should proceed to further annexation in North Africa and so convert the Mediterranean into "a French lake."

Some extracts from the Crispi correspondence bring out his fears and hopes very clearly. In a letter to the Italian Ambassador at Berlin he says: "As this [the French protectorate] has taken place without any opposition on the part of the allied forces, the occupation of Tripoli will in like manner be no longer left in doubt. We must therefore discover some means to prevent France's absolute control in Tunis, or else make arrangements by which Tripoli shall be given to us as the only possible guarantee in face of the increase in France's military and naval power."

To Lord Salisbury Crispi wrote as follows: "The Republic is bent on occupying that

region [Tripoli], as proved by her incessant encroachments on the frontier. . . . If we had Tripoli, Bizerta would no longer be a menace either to Italy or Great Britain." A reply came through the Italian chargé d'affaires in London: "Your Excellency's letter," he writes, "has made a deep impression on Salisbury. . . . He has directed me to telegraph that 'he agrees that when the day arrives for any alteration, great or small, in the *status quo* of the Mediterranean, it is indispensable that the occupation of Tripoli should be undertaken by Italy.' . . . On one point Salisbury, however, does not agree with your Excellency: he thinks that the moment for occupation has not yet arrived. . . . Salisbury ended by saying: 'The Italian Government will have Tripoli, but the sportsman who wants to shoot his stag must wait until it comes well within the range of his gun, so that it does not escape, even if wounded.'"

It must not be forgotten that when this letter was written the condition of the Ottoman Empire seemed quite hopeless, and even the best friends of the Turks detected the signs of impending disintegration. The division of the "sick man's inheritance" in Europe seemed imminent; and in that case the detached vilayet

in North Africa would naturally have shared the fate of the European provinces.

In recent years, however, the recrudescence of national vigour amongst the Turks has astonished the world. In 1898 the Porte mobilized 500,000 men for the Greek War and other possible eventualities; and the Ottoman Army is now a factor to be seriously reckoned with. Representative government has been firmly established, and, despite many serious difficulties and some bad mistakes, far-reaching reforms have been secured. The best sentiment of Europe has applauded the noble efforts of Turkey's statesmen; but European diplomacy has helped to spoil their work by the robbery of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the encouragement given to Italy in her shameless raid on Tripoli. "The moment our reform movement is brought forward," said a Turkish officer to me, "Europe sets itself to thwart our efforts: you are strangling the infant at its birth: you do not give it a chance."

It is useless to discuss the miserable pretexts advanced by Italy to justify the campaign. But as the policy of our Foreign Office is more or less "continuous," and the English taxpayer has no more say in the matter of England's foreign relations than the Syrian peasant has

in the deliberations of the Porte, we must regretfully conclude that the Powers of Europe, including Great Britain, knew of Italy's intended raid and tacitly encouraged her to undertake it. It is not a pleasant reflection that this act of international brigandage, condemned by nine-tenths of the nation, should be accepted without protest by a British Foreign Office under a Liberal Government. The only thing to do is to acknowledge the truth of Cavour's remark that "we do things for the State which we should never dream of doing for ourselves."

Nor will I go into the question of treaties, which nowadays are simply made to be torn up at any moment when they become irksome to any of the contracting Powers which is strong enough to repudiate its solemn pledges. On 9 June, 1911, the Marchese di San Giuliano in the Italian Chamber quoted the words of a former Foreign Secretary: "It has always been an invariable rule of Italian foreign policy that, not only in Europe but in Africa also, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire should be respected and sacred . . ." and then added: "The reasons for these declarations of my authoritative predecessor are unchanged." On 29th September—less than four months afterwards—the same Minister dis-

patched an ultimatum to Turkey announcing Italy's intention to occupy the provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica!

Apart from the diplomatic heritage handed down from Crispi's days, other factors were at work in favour of the war. The Conservative and well-to-do classes were glad to have the national attention diverted from Giolitti's badly-needed programme of social reforms. Since the inception of the war nothing more has been heard in Italy of Manhood Suffrage or State Insurance. Our own pagan cry of "Avenge Majuba!" found a parallel in the keen desire of the Italians to "wipe out the stain of Adowa," not in Abyssinian but in Tripolitan blood. The financiers used patriotic demonstrations to screen their own designs on the supposed wealth of the coveted province.

The alleged wealth of Tripoli in mineral and agricultural resources has formed the *crambe repetita* of Italian journalism for several years. One of the most popular songs in Italy at the present is "Tripolitania Bella." "Bella" indeed! It would be hard to find an adjective less applicable to the dreary and sterile wastes of the Tripoli Hinterland. When the war fever has abated—and there are signs already that

the saner element in the population are beginning to question the wisdom of this adventure —the Italian people will find that they have been cruelly misled by the wild stories of this El Dorado in North Africa.

As an example of the kind of popular evidence placed before the public, we may quote from a long article in the "Giornale di Sicilia" of 7–8 January, entitled "L'Importanza economica dell' occupazione Italiana di Tripoli." The author of this article is the well-known "Socialist" deputy from Sicily, Signor de Felice, whose jingo enthusiasm for an indefensible war of conquest has filled all sincere Socialists with disgust and contempt. According to this writer three of his friends arrived in Tripoli early in January in order solely to investigate the question of the soil's fertility and the prospects of agriculture generally. The deputation consisted of Signori Longhi, Galloni, and Bolognesi, two of whom at least were Socialists. It is difficult to understand what these gentlemen mean by Socialism. After Signor de Felice had convinced them of the fact that agricultural development would pay in Tripoli, they appear to have been absolutely satisfied and quite ready to throw in their lot with the war party.

They never concerned themselves in the slightest degree with the moral questions involved in the campaign—the only criterion with these amazing Socialists was whether the adventure would pay!

And now as to the evidence that satisfied them. Thanks to the very limited promenades at the disposal of their countrymen in the country they have "annexed," the four searchers after agricultural truth first paid a visit to Sidi Mesri and advanced a short distance in front of the trenches. They noticed amid the sand "qualche filo d' erba" and then, as they stood upright in the carriage to see better, they beheld on the undulating plains before them "miracolo inaspettato! . . . immense foreste di ginestre." I know these "forests of broom," *i.e.*, vast tracts covered by a low scrub about 18 inches high, and so absolutely useless that not even a camel will eat it, unless nearly dead from hunger. After this miracle of discovery the commissioners discussed the question of the water supply, and were informed by their guide that water was "*abbondantissimo, basta vedere l' oasi*"—every Arab house in the great oasis had a well, and outside this district all deficiencies in the rainfall were made good by the heavy

fall of dew! Apart, then, from this imbecile statement about the dew, the deputation was apparently satisfied as to the general water supply of a country five times as big as Italy from the fact that water was plentiful in the oasis of Tripoli, which possesses an almost unique water storage because the town happens to be surrounded by beds of loam which hold the water running seawards from the rocks in the "forest of broom." Signor de Felice goes on "to prove" the abundance of water in Tripoli from the fact that *in Algeria* 68 artesian wells raise 113,000 litres of water in a minute. He quite overlooks another fact, viz., that the section of Northern Africa comprising Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis is wholly distinct from Tripolitania, which, lying on the edge of the Sahara, is, according to zoological geographers, "separated from the rest of Africa and included in the same region as Europe." For example, the average rainfall in the regions of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis varies from 20 to more than 40 inches, while the records of the French Consul at Benghazi, in Cyrenaica, the most fertile portion of Tripoli, marked an average of under 11 inches! So much for Signor de Felice's argument from analogy. The whole investiga-

tion, worthy of "Alice in Wonderland," was rounded off by the optimistic telegram, "Abbiamo visitato il deserto, tutta terra coltivabilissima."

Ever since the establishment of the French protectorate over Tunis in 1882 Tripoli has been a veritable Naboth's Vineyard for the Italians, and persistent attempts have been made for thirty years to stereotype the belief in the fertility of the vilayet. One agent after another has written glowing accounts of Tripoli in general and Cyrenaica in particular, but, as Dr. Gregory points out, it is easy to detect between the lines of these reports the real poverty of the soil and the almost universal scarcity of water. From my own experiences of the land which lies between the coast and the Jebel I can only say that I am amazed that any country should waste blood and treasure in an attempt to secure these horrible wastes.

"Sub curru nimium propinqui
Solis in terra domibus negata."

And if Italian agriculturists, tempted by the rhapsodies of inexperienced journalists, ever emigrate to Tripoli, I feel sure that, in the words of the late Lord Salisbury, "they will find the soil rather light!"

Dr. Gregory's admirably clear and well-informed article in the "Contemporary Review" for December ("The Resources of Tripoli") lends little support to Italian optimism. The writer is thoroughly impartial and well qualified to express an opinion, inasmuch as he formed one of the expedition organized by Mr. Zangwill in 1908 to visit Cyrenaica and investigate its suitability for Jewish settlement. The five members of the committee were admirably fitted for their work; they included Mr. M. B. Duff, an engineer with expert knowledge of water supply, and Dr. Trotter, a graduate in agriculture at Edinburgh who had farmed in the Sudan. The results of the investigation were signally disappointing. "Though Cyrenaica," says Dr. Gregory, "is doubtless the most fertile province of Tripoli, we had reluctantly to report that the country, owing to its large area of useless land and its insufficient and uncertain water supply, was quite unsuitable for extensive agricultural colonies."

The question of North Africa's water supply is full of interest. The corn-ship of Alexandria which carried St. Paul towards Rome was only one of many that fed the population of the Italian cities. Cyrene was more

especially the granary from which Rome and Byzantium imported their corn. The possible interruption of this traffic was an object of serious dread to the Imperial authorities at a time when an Emperor's power might depend on the regular supply of "panis et circenses." On one occasion, when the philosopher Sopater was charged with having delayed the corn fleet by magical rites, Constantine promptly cut off his head, δι' ὑπερβολὴν σοφίας—"because he was too clever": and even the great Athanasius narrowly escaped conviction on a similar indictment.

Where then are the cornfields of classical times? Has some vast climatic change overtaken the regions of Northern Africa within the last twenty centuries? At first sight this seems obvious. The wonderful ruins of Timgad stand in the midst of a desolate plain. Its theatre could accommodate four thousand spectators: its temples and market-place are on a proportionately large scale. Whence came the drinking-water for such a population as once dwelt within these silent walls, and, more wonderful still, the water which filled the public baths, the largest in Africa? Some 600 miles to the south of Tripoli lies Ghat, the ancient Rapsa, a vast

centre of military and commercial life under the Empire. Were the garrison and the citizens of this big town supplied from the miserable wells which barely meet the needs of its tiny population now? It is clear that sweeping changes in climate have overtaken some parts of the earth's surface. Arabia Felix once justified its name, and the half-buried cities discovered by Sven Hedin among the sand-drifts of Central Asia had a water supply and inhabitants seven centuries ago. Is our globe gradually drying up? And will our descendants in ages to come be brought face to face with the same fearful struggle which, according to Professor Lowell's ingenious theory, is taxing all the energies of a dying race in Mars?

Nevertheless, from local and literary evidence it is doubtful if the climate and soil of Tripoli have undergone any extensive changes within the last two thousand years. The Romans took infinite pains to collect and distribute the rainfall. On more than one occasion I have suddenly come across the remains of Roman cisterns in the middle of the barren plains. Dr. Gregory also points out that a coast town like Ptolemata was wholly dependent for its water on an aqueduct from the interior. This

writer also quotes Strabo to show that in Marcus Cato's days precisely the same geographical conditions prevailed in Northern Tripoli as exist to-day—"deep sand and burning heat," with occasional wells and oases. He might have added the much earlier description given by Herodotus: "In the upper part Libya is infested with wild beasts, and all beyond that is sand, dreadfully short of water and utterly desolate." And the same writer recounts with some slight misgivings—"I only repeat what the Libyans say"—the curious story of the Psylli, who, when the south wind [the dreaded *khamsin* or, in Tripoli, *ghilli*] dried up all their water-tanks, determined to make war against the wind, and when they arrived at the sands, the south wind blew and covered them over.

Hence, in summary, it is conceivable that with infinite patience and at infinite cost the Romans of to-day, by a vast system of water storage and distribution and the sinking of deep artesian wells, might restore to certain strips of Tripolitan territory some measure of the productiveness enjoyed in classical times. But in days of cheap and rapid ocean transport it is doubtful if agriculture maintained by artificial and costly irrigation and exposed

to strange vagaries of climate could hope to compete with more favoured countries. There has been much wild talk in Italy about the prospects of olive culture in the "new province." But the number of fertile olives in Tripoli is small: the trees take years before they reach maturity, and even then the net value of the oil is only one shilling a year per tree! In Dr. Gregory's opinion, the best that can be said of this distressful country is that the yield of barley might be increased. The present yield of this cereal provides enough to feed the population, and the surplus finds its way to the whisky distilleries of Scotland!

During the month of December two events caused great searchings of heart at Rome. The Italian Government was simply informed that French troops had occupied the oasis of Djenat, while the bay and harbour of Sollum had been duly annexed by the Egyptian Government with the full approval of the Sultan. The Italians were full of frenzied indignation at the apparent duplicity of Great Britain and France, and the nation which approved its own campaign of wholesale brigandage went into transports of rage because small portions of the coveted country had been quietly appropriated

by two other European Powers. One of the many indignant letters contributed to the newspapers came from the pen of Signor Cirmeni, a well-known politician. "As Sollum," he wrote, "is a part of Cyrenaica, over which Italy has proclaimed her full and complete sovereignty, how can Egypt and England accept it as a gift from the Sultan? What is the meaning of this incessant alteration of the Egyptian frontier to the detriment of Cyrenaica during the progress of the Turco-Italian War? First of all, England made the successful demand that the blockade by our warships, which extended up to the Egyptian frontier, as marked on all the maps, should be withdrawn, because, forsooth, we had blockaded that part of Tripolitan territory upon which Egypt had seen fit to encroach. And now, to-day, by a gracious concession from the Sultan, who has no longer any right to dispose of a single yard of territory in the vilayet he has lost, the Egyptian frontier has been advanced so as to include the port of Sollum. Why should England derive such vast profit from the war between ourselves and Turkey?"

One cannot be altogether surprised at this irritation in the Italian Press. There in a few coast towns lay the great invading army, un-

able, after all the great expenditure of blood and treasure, to advance anywhere more than three miles from their ships, while all the world laughed at their ridiculous "annexation"; on the other hand France and England, without the slightest exertion or expense, coolly appropriated an undefined area in the far south-west and a coast-line of 200 miles in the north-east.

The oasis of Djanet was occupied on November 27th by a company of native infantry, dispatched from a military post in the extreme south of Algeria, while a squadron of *goumiers* (irregular Arab cavalry) was held in reserve. The somewhat hollow pretext put forward by the French Government for this seizure of territory was the usual one that "insecurity was prevalent in the district," because since the outbreak of hostilities the Turkish troops had left Ghat and even Ghadames in order to join the Ottoman Army on the coast. The real fact seems to be that the French were disagreeably surprised to find that Turkish patrols were occupying the regions round Ghat as late as 1910, and seized the present moment, when the Ottoman authorities were too busy elsewhere to interfere, for establishing themselves definitely in the oasis of Djanet.

According to the latest map of Tripoli published at Novara, Djanet lies 100 kilometres south-west of Ghat, in a cultivated tract of country at the foot of the Tassili range. It is difficult to realize what advantage France can derive from the occupation of this remote and thinly populated oasis, though it is fairly near —about 60 miles—to the great caravan route which runs south from Ghadames and Ghat to the western Sahara. It is alleged that frequent slave-raiding expeditions towards the Hinterland of Morocco have been organized from the Djanet district, and this was the pretext advanced in July 1905, when the French Captain Touchard occupied the oasis. In 1906 the Sultan agreed in a typical *Irade* to the provisional neutralization of Djanet pending a definite settlement of the frontier. The French maintain that the terms of this *Irade* were violated by the Turks themselves in 1908 and 1910, and they have now settled the *quæstio vexata* once for all.

As compared with the somewhat dubious proceedings of the French at Djanet, our own annexation of Sollum is surrounded with a veritable halo of justification, for it was definitely offered to the British Government by the Sultan: in fact, it was proposed by the

Ottoman Government at an earlier date that Great Britain should take over the whole of Tripoli, but this responsibility was declined with thanks.

The bay of Sollum has been a bone of rather amicable contention between Egypt and the Porte for a long time past. The frontier between Tripoli and the Khedive's dominions has always hitherto been vague and indefinite. In 1841 the Imperial *Irade* which confirmed Mehemet Ali in the government of Egypt declared that the frontier would be shown in an "accompanying map," but no such map was found with the *Irade*. Nevertheless Turkey has always up to the present maintained that the frontier commenced at the promontory of Ras-el-Kanais, while on the other hand Egypt has held that the bay of Sollum was the western extremity of her territory. The difference in the two claims covers about 300 kilometres. The chief value of Sollum lies in the fact that it is the only place, except Tobruk, along this dreary and barren coast where a decent anchorage can be secured, and it seems that by the building of a mole a really useful harbour might be called into existence and easily fortified. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ* at Rome! The much-advertised Tobruk, the

hypothetical naval base of the future, is shorn of half its importance, if within 80 miles the powerful ships of Great Britain can ride securely in the deep waters of Sollum.

From another point of view future prosperity may accrue to the Khedive's new territory round the bay of Sollum. The over-population of Malta is becoming a serious problem, and there is no reason why the new harbour should not form a tolerable overflow residence for some of our Maltese fellow-subjects. Sollum has not hitherto been an outlet for any caravan route, but there is said to be plenty of fresh water and possibilities of successful agriculture. It is therefore quite probable that in time useful openings may be found in the neighbourhood of the bay for some of the sober and industrious immigrants that Malta sends from her overcrowded shores. The Khedive's coast railway will no doubt be extended westward to Sollum; and how great a commercial prosperity might accrue to the new town if another line were built across Egypt to connect the two seaports of Sollum and Port Sudan!

Turkey was utterly unprepared for the war, and the blame for this must be laid principally at the door of Hakki Pasha. The maintenance of large navies *pari passu* with that of large

armies is straining the resources of even the richer European Powers almost to breaking-point. Turkey has wisely abandoned the idea of an expensive fleet, and has concentrated all her efforts on the creation of a large and efficient army. The main objective of this army is the defence of European Turkey in the "inevitable" war against Russia and Bulgaria. Hence, at the commencement of the last Yemen revolt Shevket Pasha (the Minister for War) felt strongly disinclined to deplete the army corps of Adrianople and Constantinople in order to provide reinforcements for Arabia. But there in Tripoli lay some 15,000 men, most of them Arab-speaking, and all of them armed with a different rifle from that used by the Sultan's troops in Europe. In the course of a famous conversation, the War Minister asked Hakki Pasha if he could guarantee the absence of any hostile designs against Tripoli on the part of Italy. Hakki, fresh from his Italian bridge-parties and his personal ties with Italy, declared that Shevket might safely withdraw the bulk of the Tripoli garrison for service in Arabia. This was accordingly done, and further detachments were sent to fill up certain *cadres* in the European garrisons. Fortunately, however,

for Turkey, the stock of ammunition provided for the full garrison was left in Tripoli, and has since been drawn upon to good effect. Fresh stores of rifles and cartridges arrived in the "Derna" a few days before the ultimatum. Italy's much-vaunted navy began the war by two bad blunders. The inferior warships of Turkey were allowed to steam in safety from Beirut to the Dardanelles, and the transport "Derna" was permitted to enter the harbour of Tripoli, though, in full accordance with Italy's piratical methods, she might have been seized outside and the war at once precipitated.

It is difficult indeed to forecast the future course of this unique war. The Italian army of 120,000 men cannot withdraw from their intrenched positions, nor, on the other hand, does Turkey show the slightest disposition to sue for peace on any terms acceptable to Italy.

The main difficulties before Italy would seem to be the contingency sooner or later of a bad reverse in the desert, the immense drain on her military and financial resources resulting from a protracted campaign, and the possibility of a violent change in popular feeling if the war is unduly prolonged without any salient results.

Turkey, on the other hand, is faced with

the question—Will the Arabs remain faithful? There are certainly no signs of any defection at present. At the time of the great rains in November the loyalty of the Arabs round Tripoli was put to a severe test. The rainfall for 1908-9-10 had been miserably inadequate and the utter failure of the harvests had caused many Arabs to migrate into Tunis in order to escape starvation. And so when the beneficent rain descended in full measure, the husbandmen were miles away from their little fields. Some few returned for a time to their farms, but the vast majority placed patriotism before pocket and remained at their posts even at the risk of subsequent starvation for themselves and their families.

The Italians will doubtless continue their efforts to secure by bribes what they cannot accomplish by arms; but here again the solidarity of Islam will, I think, prove even stronger than the inborn avarice of the Arab character.

One of the most serious handicaps on the Ottoman side is the existence of internal dissensions. If the Turks will only lay aside political intrigues and disagreements at home and present a united front to the enemy, the war may go on for years and wear Italy out

sooner than the Turks and Arabs. Italy has probably by this time spent quite ten millions on the war, and, despite the optimism of official reports, she has recently attempted without success to raise a loan in Paris. On the other hand, Turkey has hitherto spent very little on the campaign. The immense contributions received from Egypt and Tunis have hitherto sufficed, for the daily pay and food of Arabs does not amount to 6d. a head. The bombardment of obsolete forts, or even the possible seizure of an island, leaves the Turks quite cold. No Italian Army dare set foot on Ottoman soil in Europe or Asia. It is possible, however, that the ill-luck which has hitherto pursued the Turks in the Red Sea may turn and that the transport of a few battalions might change the situation in Eritrea. What a dramatic and amusing incident would be the Sultan's effective annexation of the one Italian colony!

Aeroplanes and dirigible balloons may, of course, prove more formidable as the numbers and experience of the aviators increase. The balloons are intended to carry 250 bombs, charged with a high explosive, and a few can be dropped from an aeroplane, though in this case the aviator has to guide the machine

with one hand and use the other for fixing the fuse in the bomb, placed between his knees. The explosive is contained in round steel cases about 3½ inches in diameter. Little has been effected up to the present by air-ships in the way of attack, though their scouting has proved invaluable. Orientation in the desert is difficult in the absence of salient landmarks, and, in order to be safe from bullets or, at times, the air currents due to heavy gun-fire, the aviators must remain at a height of some 2,000 feet. The Arabs show no signs of perturbation when they see the air-ships, and sooner or later the Turks may themselves secure aeroplanes and be able to try conclusions with the enemy in this new field of combat. How ridiculously inconsistent are the present laws of war, which forbid the use of an explosive bullet but permit a man to drop explosive bombs indiscriminately upon an area containing men, women, children, and hospital patients!

Another factor—possibly a deciding factor—in the ultimate fortunes of the Turco-Italian War is the attitude of the Senussi. We have heard nothing more of the egregious deputation dispatched by the Italians to the Senussi with offers of religious liberty, rewards, and

privileges, in return for support against the Turks. This embassy, if indeed it ever started, was doomed to failure in advance. As Dr. Gregory points out, the long-standing disagreement between the Senussi and Constantinople was due to the intense fervour which characterized the Mohammedanism of the former community, and the quarrel has been settled for some time in face of the common peril of the infidel invaders.

Two opposite theories are commonly held as to the real value of Senussi support. Reports made to the Intelligence Department of the French War Office would seem to indicate that from the point of view of military organization and equipment the co-operation of this inland community is an asset of little value. In short, it is believed that the story of a large and efficient force of armed men in the Kufra oasis is a pricked bubble. On the other hand, it is alleged on good authority that the Senussi possess field-guns and immense quantities of modern rifles and ammunition. The Arab is an adept at concealment, as the Italians found to their cost in the oasis: and it is possible that munitions of war on a large scale may be hidden in the Senussi settlements. The weapons recently used against the French in

Wadai came, it is said, from Kufra. I have myself been privileged to hold long conversations with a Moslem who has lived amongst the Senussi and knows more about them, probably, than the paid agents of any foreign Power. I do not feel at liberty, under the present conditions of the campaign, to discuss the question of the actual military resources of the Senussi. I will only say that this powerful sect is in full sympathy with the Ottoman Government in its defence of Tripoli against the invader, and has already rendered assistance to Enver Bey in Cyrenaica. I suspect that some of the light field-artillery before Benghazi may have found its way thither on camels from the oasis of Kufra.

As to subsequent help from the Senussi on a larger scale, two things must be borne in mind. One is the immense distance of Kufra from the sea: the Senussi settlement is nearly 1,000 kilometres from Benghazi, and nearly double that distance from Nesciat Bey's headquarters. Further, it must be remembered that the Arab forces are not governed by the ordinary conditions of a standing army. The number of Arabs fighting at this moment under Turkish leadership does not represent more than a small fraction of the native

warriors available in the interior. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that in the last resort there are fully 100,000 Arabs in Tripoli capable of bearing arms. The value of these vast resources is fully recognized by the Ottoman Government. At present large and well-equipped bands of Arabs arrive at the front, take part in the constant attacks which keep the invaders shut up in the coast towns, and then return to their villages for a season to look after their flocks and fields and families, while other contingents arrive to take their place. A more or less complete parallel to these conditions was found amongst the Boers, who frequently varied their service with the commandos by visits to their farms of some weeks' duration—a practice which, however calculated to upset a general's plans, could not be prevented. The Senussi may therefore, quite apart from such reinforcements as they have already dispatched to Cyrenaica, be reckoned amongst the reserves which may be drawn upon for the defence of Tripoli.

But from another point of view altogether the sympathy of the Senussi may be of infinite value to the Turks. The religious influence of this community is enormous, and their missionaries have penetrated far and wide in the

West, North, and East of Africa, in Nigeria and Uganda. According to my informant, who, apart from his personal knowledge of the Senussi's headquarters, had travelled widely in Africa, any call to arms by the Senussi against the Italians would be answered by scores of thousands of fighting Moslems drawn not only from the remote regions of the South, but from Tunis and Egypt.

There is one more reflection which should have given pause to the "imperialist" Press of Italy before it drove the nation to this insensate adventure. If Italy ever does succeed, after an immense outlay of lives and money, in securing some sort of control over the deserts of Tripoli, she would hold her new province entirely on the sufferance of England and France. If her two powerful neighbours found themselves ranged against Italy in the course of some great European conflict, naval bases at Sollum and Bizerta, combined with France's vast military resources in Tunis, would deprive Italy of her dearly-won province in a few weeks. The military "descendants of Scipio" would be cleared out of North Africa bag and baggage; Egypt would take over Cyrenaica, while Tunis, starting from the coveted Ghadames, would extend her borders over Western Tripoli.

CHAPTER II

THE JOURNEY TO THE FRONT

THE interior of Tripoli has hitherto been, to a large extent, a *terra incognita*. Few, indeed, are the travellers who have penetrated far beyond the towns of the coast, and even great explorers like Rallfs, Barth, Dickson, and Duveyrier never appear to have diverged far from the beaten tracks of the great caravan routes leading into the Sahara and Sudan. Hence when last October I determined to visit Tripoli, I found it difficult to secure any information as to routes, transport, or the general conditions of life which prevailed in the Hinterland. Here was a country on the shores of the Mediterranean and within six days of London which was almost as unknown as the interior of Labrador or Arabia. But from consular and other reports concerning the coast regions of this neglected vilayet, and from previous ex-

periences of my own amongst remote Arab communities, I felt practically sure of one thing—that in this desert campaign I must be prepared to "rough it"; and rough it we did, from Nesciat Bey to the poorest Bedouin. I received every courtesy from the members of the Ottoman Embassy, and the editor of the "Manchester Guardian" kindly authorized me to act as his correspondent with the Turkish Army.

Let any subsequent traveller who wishes to reach Tripoli via Marseilles and Tunis avoid Thursday for his departure from London, for on that day crowds of people with mountainous heaps of luggage leave London to join the steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental, Bibby, and Union Castle Lines at Marseilles. The normal inconvenience attaching to the crowded trains and steamers on a Thursday was accentuated on the present occasion by a "crossing" so rough that the Calais boat was forced to enter Boulogne. The result was absolute chaos, and to my dismay I was compelled to sail from Marseilles without my registered baggage. In my case the temporary loss of my heavier baggage was not serious, as it duly reached me at Tunis four days later. But when one is leaving at once for India or Japan,

the case of missing baggage wears a very different complexion, and I sincerely sympathized with some of the passengers who departed for the East with one warm suit of clothes and a small dressing-case. Amongst our fellow-passengers to Marseilles were eight young men who were on their way to Uganda. Few, if any, of them had ever crossed the Channel before; they wore school colours and did not know an olive-tree when they saw one. Nevertheless, they held and expressed very decided views—the ideas of the College Debating Society and the London club—that the "man on the spot" must be the sole arbiter on matters colonial and that kindness was absolutely wasted on black men: the one ethical quality necessary in a representative of Great Britain was firmness. Further, they held it to be highly discreditable that through the refusal of the British taxpayer to heavily subsidize a private line of steamers the Germans had succeeded in establishing a trade route along the East African coast. They also viewed with disfavour the deportation of Mr. Galbraith Cole. One could only hope that when these inexperienced youths grew older they would grow wiser. As it is, an immense amount of harm is done all over our vast

Empire by some of our younger soldiers and civil servants, who, utterly devoid of *cosmopolitanisme gracieux*, treat their non-English fellow-subjects with a contempt which would be ridiculous if it were not dangerous.

In days of old fearsome beasts kept ward over the Garden of the Hesperides which blossomed on the coast of Tripoli; and now too "the parts of Libya about Cyrene" and the regions towards the West are jealously guarded by modern dragons in the shape of Italian cruisers, Egyptian Zaptiehs, and French Spahis. It is not altogether an easy task to reach either of the opposing armies. The French authorities, urged by the reproaches of Italy, have increased their precautions against contraband; and in some cases war-correspondents have had to submit to troublesome delays. I therefore came to Tunis fully prepared to encounter considerable difficulties in my journey over the Tunisian frontier. These anticipations were based on an account recently forwarded by a correspondent who, I found afterwards, had failed to take the obvious course of consulting the French military authorities before he left Tunis. I can honestly say that every possible courtesy was shown to me by the French

authorities. On my way South I was fortunate enough to enjoy the society of Mr. Pernull, of Tunis, Mr. Morse, an American sportsman on his way to shoot in the south-east of Tunis, and Mr. Abbott, a literary man who, like myself, was making for Tripoli, and travelled with me as far as the Turkish camp. One of the difficulties encountered at Tunis arose from the scarcity of gold coinage in the city. A subscription list organized by some Turkish officers in Tunis had produced the vast sum of £70,000, and the banks had almost been depleted of napoleons, for paper money was useless in Tripoli. This generous contribution was proof, if further proof were needed, of the wholehearted sympathy shown to the Ottoman cause by France's Moslem subjects.

I came across several of the five thousand Maltese who live in Tunis. They were in a very bad humour, and protested with, I think, some justice, that Great Britain had neglected her Maltese subjects in Tripoli during the hardships and trials caused by the Italian bombardment and occupation of the coast towns. They said that even the Jews had looked after their co-religionists, while British subjects had been left to shift for themselves. Their shops and houses had been destroyed or

looted, and at least eight Maltese had been killed by Italian shells. Some of these refugees were furious, and declared they were sorry they had ever seen the English flag, and I must confess that the tone of the Foreign Office answers in the Commons with reference to the killing of these British subjects was not calculated to soften the indignation of the Maltese. The journey from Tunis to Médenine was full of interest, and one special advantage of the new railway from Shousha to Sfax is that a passenger is allowed ample time to visit the majestic ruins of the amphitheatre at El Djem, one of the finest specimens of Antonine architecture ever erected. In England we do not know enough about Tunis. In some respects its charms are superior to those of the much-visited Egypt, while its railway system is on a much larger scale. The climate is delightful and the archæological interests of the country are quite unrivalled. A cholera scare, based on a brief outbreak of the disease, which was suppressed almost at the moment of its origin, has, I fear, tended to keep tourists away from Tunis, though such fears are at present altogether unjustified.

From Sfax a rumbling diligence conveys passengers who are not in a hurry, and can

put up with a night journey, to Gabes and Médenine. But we managed to secure two motor-cars for the whole journey to Ben-Gardan at about £12 each. We sped along the excellent French roads—oh! how often I longed for them in Tripoli—and after lunching on delicious "coscous" at cholera-stricken Gabes, reached Médenine in time for dinner. There was some Arab dancing to be seen here, the same monotonous, jerky movements which never seem to lose their charm in the eyes of an Oriental audience. At Biskra, British tourists sit gazing at these tiresome exercises in stuffy Arab cafés and permit their daughters, carefully shielded from the outward and visible signs of wickedness at home, to sit cheek by jowl with such notorious ladies as the dancers of the Waled Nail tribe.

Just before reaching Médenine we met three Turks who had crossed the frontier; two of the poor fellows were wounded in the legs and the party had taken twenty-five days to reach Ben-Gardan by the circuitous route via Dehibat. They were now seated in the diligence on their way to Sfax, and thence in a steamer to Constantinople. The trio had apparently lost all they possessed through the Italian occupation of Tripoli town, but they

were cheerful and dignified and genuinely glad to hear that I sympathized with their people and was on my way to join them. Throughout our journey from Sfax all the Arabs we met appeared to know where we were going, and took every opportunity of showing their friendliness. The sun shone brightly and the motor run was delightful. In the distance on our right the fine range of Jebel Matmata rose up from the plain. Mr. Morse had, during our stay at Gabes, made all arrangements for his shooting trip to these hills, but, as his rifles had not yet arrived, he gave us the pleasure of his company as far as Ben-Gardan. He hoped to get a fair number of antelope, but told me it was not easy to get the local Arabs to travel amongst the mountains, as the high ground was infested with poisonous snakes. Two Turkish officers disguised as innocent tourists were standing in the street at Médenine waiting their opportunity to get over the border. Some sixty officers in all had, I believe, managed to join their comrades in this way, and near the frontier was a little heap of European hats, for the moment they were sure of their ground the Ottoman soldiers used to throw their hats behind them with a laugh and don the tarbush which was concealed

in their pockets. I should have liked to have seen something of that strange corps popularly known as the "joyeux," but more formally as *L'Infanterie Légère d'Afrique*, a part of which is quartered near Médenine. The soldiers of this disciplinary corps consist of murderers, thieves, *apaches*, and the like. They wear the ordinary blue and red uniform of the French infantry, but, after their drills and route-marching, are carefully locked up in the evening. The "joyeux" are of course quite distinct from the "Foreign Legion," quartered in the south of Algeria. More than half of the latter corps are Germans, but no Englishman is at present to be found in its ranks: one of its privates is a former bishop.

A good story is going the rounds in Southern Tunis of an English tourist. This gentleman, anxious to secure some of the bats which haunt the troglodyte caves of Gafsa, offered 50 centimes apiece for specimens of this creature. Shortly afterwards an Arab turned up with four palpitating sacks each containing one hundred bats and claimed £8 in accordance with the Englishman's offer. The indiscreet naturalist was terribly upset, but there was no way out of the difficulty, and he had to pay up.

The road to Ben-Gardan is officially described as a *piste*, and I realized that I had not been overcharged for a motor compelled to risk its machinery and tyres over such appalling ground, which in rainy weather would be quite impassable. The scars left by the recent deluge of rain were seen on every side: in one place a flooded stream, now absolutely dried up, had carried away half a bridge, and made a long detour necessary.

As Ben-Gardan is situated in a military *annexe*, administered by native sheikhs, we secured orders from the commandant for the requisite horses and camels. We arrived about midday, and were fortunate enough to find a party of the *Croissant Rouge* who were making ready for an immediate start. There were six Turkish doctors under the leadership of a most charming and cultured Ottoman, Dr. Abdul Kerim Sabatier Bey, a professor in the Medical Faculty of the Stamboul University. There were also a number of hospital orderlies and male nurses, one of whom, a lithe and active Albanian, Osman by name, wore a white peaked hat of the pierrot type and a sheepskin coat. He was an excellent horseman and quite the "funny man" of the party, speaking Greek as well as Turkish. With the

Red Crescent contingent rode Captain Bettelheim, who had seen service in South Africa under General French. I had made his acquaintance in London, and it was a great pleasure to see him again. The doctors with their servants and stores had arrived at Tunis from Constantinople via Marseilles, and had, in consequence of many vexatious delays, taken a month to reach the frontier. Beginning with the luxury of the Orient express, they had descended the scale of luxury and were now travelling in the humble and uncomfortable environment of a desert caravan. When the party reached Tunis the number of male nurses on the staff appeared suspiciously large, and after careful examination of their credentials about a dozen Turks were compelled to return. Why is our own Red Cross Society doing nothing? The dispatch of a competent staff of English doctors and nurses would be a godsend to the Ottoman army, and how deeply would such humanitarian effort be appreciated by millions of our Moslem fellow-subjects in India!

At Gabes we had come across an Arab "guide," who agreed to act as servant to Abbott and myself as far as Azizieh. This man, Mohammed by name, was very smart

in his fête garments; his silk burnous, he told us, had cost 60 francs, and his *chechia* (Tunisian fez) with the big tassel fr. 4.50. He rushed into his little squat house, said good-bye to his wife and cousin, and emerged with an armful of everyday clothes. After this brief interval for domestic farewells and preparations for a somewhat novel journey, Mohammed perched himself on the top of my valise, and we resumed our journey for the frontier. I entertained grave doubts as to the possibility of his being able to pass the frontier without express permission, but he informed me that even if the frontier guard refused him leave to accompany us, he would execute a movement to the rear with simulated expressions of keen regret, and at nightfall would double like a hare and rejoin us at some point well within Tripolitan territory.

By dint of hard travelling one can reach Azizieh from Ben-Gardan in five days. It is not easy to describe the successive stages with any topographical minuteness, because, as far as I know, there exists no really adequate or reliable map of Tripoli, and even the places which would naturally be marked on such a map frequently possess different names.

However, for the guidance of any subsequent voyager to Tripoli by the Tunis frontier route, let me briefly say that the most direct route leads him via Shousha, Bou-Kamesch, Zouara, Azilat, and Xavia, and that the whole distance from Ben-Gardan is about 240 kilometres (150 miles). It is curious that on the most recent map of Tripoli to be found in London, and that a French map, the town of Ben-Gardan is not marked at all, though it has existed for seventeen years.

As to the eastern frontiers of Tripoli, let no one undertake to enter the vilayet from Egypt who is not prepared for endless delays and a monotonous desert journey lasting at least six weeks. It is doubtful, however, if Nesciat Bey's army could ever be absolutely cut off from the outer world. In the first place, all the Moslem population of Tunis and the majority of European residents, with the exception of the Italians, some 100,000 in number, are heart and soul with the Turks in the present struggle, and the same feelings prevail throughout the length and breadth of Egypt. Even if the Egyptian and Tunisian Governments exercise every precaution, how can they possibly maintain a really adequate surveillance over frontiers of such immense

extent? Who are to act as frontier guards? If all the European soldiers in Egypt and Tunis were to be detailed for this service they could cover only a small fraction of these vast and indefinite boundaries. Egyptians, Sudanese, and Arabs would be required, and every one of them would be in warm sympathy with his co-religionists. Nor, indeed, can a single French soldier be well spared for prolonged service on the remote frontiers of the south-east. The feeling of the Arabs against their Italian neighbours in the towns and villages of Tunis is intensely hostile, and has been influenced by the transports of joy manifested by the local Italians over the early and extremely easy triumphs of occupation. The authorities of the city of Tunis had been taken unawares by the recent outburst of racial feeling. The Zouaves had been drafted to Morocco in large numbers, and further, as Tunis lay for a short time under the ban of a cholera epidemic, all French troops had been temporarily removed to some distance from the capital and possibilities of infection. The result was that when the serious outbreak of rioting took place between Arabs and Italians on 7 November, only 240 Zouaves were available. Outrage and assassination reigned for a

whole day almost unchecked, but the telegraph brought 400 more Zouaves from Bizerta, and the city regained its normal peace. But for weeks afterwards Europeans were not permitted to visit the native quarter after a certain hour.

Everybody near the frontier talked eagerly about Tripoli, where, for the moment, military affairs appeared to have reached an *impasse*. But it seemed clear that the Italians had found themselves in serious difficulties, and that every effort was being made by their commander to keep the knowledge of these difficulties from Europe in general and Italy in particular. Cholera was prevalent in Tripoli town, and the question of the water supply was causing great anxiety to the authorities. The great crusading army destined to carry Christianity into the heart of Northern Africa was actually driven to secure its drinking-water from Italy. As to the comparative quality of the two armies there was no difference of opinion. Man for man, your Turkish *Nizam* or *Redif*, or even the Arab irregular, is in every way superior to the excitable and unstable Italian. There was something rather fine, however quixotic, about the proposal of an old Turkish general at the commencement of the present hostilities, who

challenged the enemy to place any force they liked in any position they selected, and then fight it out with an equal number of his gallant Osmanlis.

At the same time a considerable number of Frenchmen, Levantines, Jews, and persons of nondescript nationalities residing in Tunis and Algiers, openly espoused the cause of Italy. Their motives are undoubtedly in some cases sincere and disinterested, but the two main reasons alleged for their attitude are merely opportunist and based on expediency. The demands of the Italian Army have caused large exports from Tunis and Algiers of transport animals, meat, and vegetables, and some of the Tunis papers openly congratulate their city on the impetus to its local trade caused by the war. On the other hand there always exists amongst the French population a certain fear and distrust of the native Arabs, and French officers, whose sympathies in almost every case were with the Turks, nevertheless viewed with apprehension the possibilities of an Italian overthrow in Tripoli. The prevailing question in Tunis as well as Egypt seemed to be this—If the Arabs succeed in beating back the assault of a European Power in Tripoli, what will be the effect produced

by this triumph on the millions of their fellow-Moslems in North Africa, who in varying degrees hate their Christian rulers and are controlled by the sword, and the sword alone?

Abbott and I had agreed to pay 12 francs each for the hire of two camels, but at the last moment the owner packed all the baggage on one camel, for which he demanded 24 francs —a typical Arab swindle which in this case was not successful. Up came the horses, and at length we began our journey across the desert. Behind us lay all the certainties—motor-cars, houses, and regular meals—before us was spread the "untented kosmos of the illimitable desert" and the delights of the unknown. What we should see, how we should live, when we should return—all these things lay on the knees of the gods.

Our big caravan had left Ben-Gardan at 3 p.m., and on reaching Shousha about eight we waited in the bright moonlight for the arrival of the baggage. This last outpost of French civilization consists of a well-built konak or fortified courtyard, wherein dwelt a contractor and an Arab telegraphist. A little sensation was caused here by the sudden appearance of six Arab officials with orders to prevent

a German doctor, travelling somehow or other under the ægis of the Red Crescent, from leaving French territory. The German was terribly upset, for with his small hand-portmanteau, very little money, and no stores or tent, he had managed somehow to reach the frontier, though he was supposed to be on the medical staff of the German Army.

We were all anxious to press on, but as it was useless to advance too far ahead of our baggage, we resolved to spend the night at Shousha. A man's love of peace is sorely tried when he finds himself gripped by the terrible fascination of war, and is eager to reach the scene of conflict. The old warning of the Delphic oracle came back to memory—

ὃς δέ κεν ἐς Λιβύην πολυήρατον ὕστερον ἔλθῃ
γᾶς ἀναδαιομένας μετά οἱ ποκά φαμι μελήσειν

—which, very freely translated, might mean, "If any one comes to Tripoli too late, when terms of peace are already under discussion, he will be very sorry for his mistake."

It was bitterly cold when I awoke at five from my sleep on the hard floor of a room where eight of our party had passed the night. At Azizieh I was fortunate enough to buy a camp-bed from an Arab, but on the journey

to headquarters I had perforce to sleep on the ground, and when that ground is a stone floor one must really be tired to sleep well. We had made up our minds the night before to start at 5.30, but the best laid schemes often go very much a-gley where Arabs are concerned, and we did not make a start until 8.30. The morning was damp and misty and the Arab telegraphist prophesied "*un peu d'humidité.*" Soon after we had got out of sight of Shousha the rain fell in torrents, and pools formed themselves on the low ground sufficiently deep to water the horses. The Arabs looked miserable, the horses slipped at every step, and the poor camels floundered over the sticky surface of the desert.

My first sight of the enemy was at Bou-Kamesch, where the Roman town of Pisindon once stood. Here is an ancient Turkish fort built on a low hill near the beach, and occupied when we arrived by one Turkish soldier and two Arabs. A low reef runs parallel to the shore for quite two miles and encloses what ought to be an excellent harbour. As it was, a few boats were moored to a little jetty to the left of the block-house, but I imagine that the ancient anchorage has shared the fate of other North African harbours and been utterly spoilt

by the silting sand of this dangerous coast. Just beyond the low reef lay an Italian destroyer, black smoke pouring from its funnels. Five days before, this venerable fort had been bombarded from sheer petulance, as far as one could judge, for it was of no earthly importance from a military point of view. Two or three holes had been knocked in the masonry, and fragments of 12-pounder shells lay scattered on the rocks. The minute garrison seemed utterly indifferent to the presence of the warship or the prospect of a possible renewal of the shell-fire. Nevertheless, a party of 20 mounted men, the majority of them wearing tarbushes, was a tempting mark for the naval guns, and Abdul Kerim Bey wisely determined to leave Bou-Kamesch and make a detour which would bring the whole of the Red Crescent caravan out of sight and range. If shells had burst in the vicinity of the numerous camels heavily laden with medical stores, a disastrous stampede of the animals might have followed. Captain Bettelheim, Mr. Abbott, and myself remained at the block-house and ate our lunch under the shade of its crumbling walls. We were, of course, clearly visible to the crew of the destroyer, who refrained from any bombardment, either,

as the Turks thought, because of my white helmet, which I had not yet discarded for a tarbush, or, far more probably, because they had been informed by wireless telegraphy or other means employed by their numerous agents that the caravan in front of them belonged to the Red Crescent.

We soon picked up the doctors, who had learned from a party of Arabs that Zouara, the next halting-place on our proposed route, was being subjected to frequent bombardments. For the same valid reasons which had persuaded them to quit Bou-Kamesch the doctors resolved to sleep at Rigdalin, some 7 miles south of Zouara, and to proceed as we saw fit in the morning. One of the Arabs who had told us about Zouara was carrying a naval carbine made at Brescia. The pattern of this rifle became quite familiar to me in Tripoli, and some serious reverse must at some time have overtaken the Italian sailors on land. This carbine was a handy weapon sighted to 1,500 metres, and equipped with a long bayonet which turned on a hinge and was ordinarily carried under the barrel. I showed the proud possessor of this weapon the hole in the butt where the oil-can and cleaning material were kept, and he was delighted at the discovery of these hidden treasures.

I never ceased to regret during my stay in Tripoli that I had not followed Captain Bettelheim's example and bought a horse with a French cavalry saddle and the invaluable saddle-bags. As it was, I had to endure the terrible discomfort of an Arab saddle and stirrup-leathers so ridiculously short that one rode with a seat like a jockey. If discarded, the immense iron stirrups banged the pony's flanks whenever it trotted or galloped. Of all the uncomfortable journeys I have made in my life, few have equalled for general misery the eleven hours in the saddle from Shousha to Rigdalin. Our journeys in Tripoli often seemed interminable. As we plodded on in the dark a group of palm-trees or the bark of a dog would fill us with the hope that we had reached our bivouac ground, only to find from some Bedouin that our goal was *mush baid* (not far off), which meant very little in a country where time and distance count for little. "Allah is high and the desert wide," says the Arab as he lifts his eyes to the blue of the firmament and gazes over the sandy plains.

Rigdalin was crowded with women and children sent thither for safety from the bombardments of Zouara, and not an empty house

could be found in the town itself for love or money. But the officers at the konak did all they could for us, and we were offered the choice of an Arab tent, a little room occupied by a French engineer, and a curious vaulted room above the courtyard of the konak. There was nothing but a camel-hair rug between the hard floor and ourselves, and we had nothing but our greatcoats to protect us against the bitter cold, as the wretched baggage camels were miles behind. But I managed to get to the outside of the eight recumbent forms, and, pulling a good yard of the mat over me, contrived to keep warm; everybody else seemed to be very cold. The Red Crescent doctors had a tin of Nestlé's milk, in which we dipped some pieces of flat barley bread, almost uneatable from the sand in it; but early next morning I found an Arab and his wife frying some nice "gallettas" in olive oil, and of these we made an excellent breakfast. Kerim Bey shared his gallettas with two little Arab girls and a starving dog. The Turks, in strong contrast to the callous cruelty of the Arabs, are always kind to animals.

Our servant Mohammed had by this time shown his true colours. He was a vain, garrulous, and inefficient creature, who had visited

various parts of the Continent, including the Brussels Exhibition. He informed me that in Tunis he had quarrelled with a French officer over a fair lady, with the result that he challenged the Frenchman to a duel. The officer was so terrified at the prospect of meeting our domestic that he had paid him 200 francs in order to cancel the challenge and generally hush up the affair. I wonder if Mohammed seriously expected me to believe this rodomontade. He spoke fluent but curious French, and frequently sang "Au Clair de la Lune."

I had had more than enough of Arab saddles during my ride of 55 kilometres on the preceding day, and I determined to cover the 7 miles to Zouara on foot. The sun beat fiercely on our heads as we crossed an open plain of yellow sand all sticky from the rain. Then came a belt of trees, then the inevitable sand-dunes, and we found ourselves on the outskirts of the much-bombarded town. As we made our way to the market I noticed that the door of one of the humble Arab dwellings contained a board stamped "Guinness's Stout." The alcoholic fragment must have found its way to this Moslem village from some wreck on the stormy coast. Quite a brisk trade was

being carried on in bread, onions, citrons, dates, etc., and I sat down in the shade of a little café. Suddenly a good deal of noisy chatter arose in the corner of the market, and on walking over I found in the centre of an excited crowd the German doctor, who had crossed the frontier under cover of darkness and ridden direct to Zouara along the coast. He was in high spirits, and described an encounter with an Arab who had mistaken him for an Italian, but had been put to flight—so said the doctor—by the timely flourish of a cigarette case shaped like a Browning revolver. I explained to the Arabs as well as I could that the new arrival, who looked dreadfully shaggy and unkempt, was a great German physician *en route* for the Turkish Army, whereupon they gave him a warm welcome and some very sweet tea.

By means of the curious human telegraphy which diffused information in Tripoli as elsewhere, I had learnt long before our arrival that a mysterious Englishman had been living in Zouara for two weeks, but nobody appeared to know in what capacity he had entered Tripoli. The mystery was solved when on entering the officers' quarters I saw an unmistakable fellow-countryman dressed in quasi-

military fashion with leggings. I shall henceforward allude to this gentleman as Mr. B——. I was destined to see a great deal of him during my stay in Tripoli, and the story of his journey to the theatre of war was full of a certain dramatic interest. B—— had formerly served in the Transvaal Mounted Police, and after the declaration of war had seen some service, I believe as a "scout," with the British forces and later on as an officer in the Chartered Company's Constabulary. He had left England with £10 in his pocket, and in the course of a not uneventful passage from Marseilles to Tunis had been robbed of all his remaining money except 26s.! With this amazingly small capital B—— had actually made his way through Tunis and ultimately reached Zouara. He spoke no language except English, and the frontier authorities appear to have let him cross in sheer despair of understanding who he was or what he wanted. Had it not been for the generosity of Arabs on the way, B—— must have starved. As it was, the natives of Sfax, on discovering by means of a Maltese that B—— intended to offer his services to the Turkish Army, clubbed their sous together and presented him with no less a sum than 68 francs. An

Arab journalist travelling to Azizieh also took B—— under his wing and brought him safely to Zouara; but at this point B——'s triumphal march was checked, and the military authorities had up to the time of my arrival refused him permission to proceed further. B—— made indignant speeches and threatened the vengeance of the British Government, all to no purpose, as, apart from the inherent absurdity of these tirades, not a word of them was understood: and when he finally set out in defiance of Moussa Bey's orders, a patrol politely but firmly brought him back. Though B—— was a great nuisance to the Turks at Zouara, he could not have received more attention and courtesy had he been a British attaché accredited to the Ottoman Army. Captain Hassan Effendi insisted on giving B—— his bed, and slept himself for a fortnight on a horribly uncomfortable sofa with his legs resting on a cane chair. Further, this excellent officer shared all his meals with B——, who, to my indignation, declared that he had a right to these rations because he was willing to fight for the Turks, and, "D—n it all! the least they can do is to feed me." I reminded him that nobody had asked him to come, that he was perfectly useless as a soldier in Tripoli, and

that no other army in the world under similar conditions would have tolerated his sojourn in their midst. He had no credentials except a vague note in Turkish without any signature attached!

B—— was often perverse and foolish, not at all from a bad heart, for he was most generous and kindly, but from a large stock of ignorant prejudice. On one occasion he told Moussa Bey, one of the best officers in the Sultan's service, that his regulars were not properly drilled! It was a good thing for this ex-South African policeman that not a word of his criticisms was understood.

But for my intercession B—— would never have got beyond the confines of Zouara, but when I set out Moussa Bey stretched a point, and, without any orders from headquarters, said B—— might go if I "looked after him." As a matter of fact it was B—— who looked after me, for a more devoted companion I never met. I ventured to suggest to him that, as he possessed nothing but the clothes he wore and the contents of a small haversack, we might combine forces on the rough understanding that my tent and general stock in trade were at our joint disposal if he would act as cook-housekeeper and "feed with the

family." This arrangement worked admirably. B——'s practical ability and resourcefulness rendered our tiny *ménage* by far the most comfortable one in camp, and our meals were a cynosure to neighbouring eyes.

My companion's immediate intention was to offer himself as a volunteer in the Turkish Army. I warned him beforehand that any employment in this capacity was most unlikely. Without a syllable of French, Turkish, or Arabic, he could not hope for a commission. As to service in the ranks of the regular army, he knew no infantry drill, and finally, if he sallied out alone with the Arabs he stood more chance of being killed by his comrades than by the Italians. My anticipations were correct, and Fethi Bey declined to entertain any idea of B—— serving in the army. In fact, Mr. Montagu's brief service had caused the Ottoman authorities so much trouble and inconvenience that I fear the door is closed permanently to stray Englishmen who are prepared to violate the law by enlisting in the Ottoman Army at the front. All said and done, B—— had accomplished a courageous feat. Without money or experience or any knowledge of languages, he triumphed over serious obstacles and covered

the whole 150 miles to Azizieh on foot. He had been to some extent rewarded by the fact that at Zouara he went through a week of almost incessant bombardment, and on two occasions had narrow escapes. B—— had plenty of pluck and was an excellent horseman; with some knowledge of Arabic, Turkish, or even French he might, despite his want of military training, have proved a useful scout with the Turkish outposts.

We were all most hospitably entertained by the Turkish officers in the barracks, which lay in the middle of date-palms and to the east of the town. Several long blocks of buildings formed the men's quarters, and in the centre stood the officers' apartments, with a broad verandah in front. A little to the right was the mosque, a great centre not only for prayer, but for important deliberations between the Arabs and their Turkish commanders. Our baggage was placed in these sacred precincts and a sentry mounted at the door. The mosque holds a position in Islam quite subordinate to that assigned to church buildings in medieval and modern Christianity. Moslem worship is a personal matter between a man and his Creator, quite independent of minister or mosque, and although the Prophet laid stress

on the power of collective prayer, neither he nor his followers have ever attached to the "assembling of themselves together" the same value as is accorded to united worship by St. Paul and later Christian teachers.

The present Commandant at Zouara is a distinguished Arab, Bimbashi (Major) Mahomed Moussa Bey. He comes from the Yemen and is a relative of Imam Yahir, the famous leader—in successive revolts against Turkish authority, but now in full accord with his fellow Moslems in face of the common peril to Islam. Moussa Bey was trained in the Military College in Stamboul, and has shown consummate ability during his command of the Zouara coast-line. His influence over the Arabs is amazing. Every morning a crowd of these irregulars would assemble behind the officers' quarters with all manner of requests, grievances, and items of information. There stood the Commandant, his well-worn tunic open, slippers on his feet, a small white cap on his head, with no sword—this had been smashed by a shell splinter. In half an hour everything would be settled, and the Arabs would go off to their posts happy and contented. But Moussa Bey was firm as well as kind. When the first bombardment occurred

the townspeople were filled with dismay, and it seemed for the moment as if a headlong flight of the population might leave Zouara almost at the mercy of an Italian landing-party. The Commandant, however, after his orders to "be steady" were disregarded, drew his revolver and, without further ado, shot the two chief panic-mongers dead. Confidence was thus restored, and now every day a large body of Arabs lies waiting along the coast for the long-threatened disembarkation of an Italian force, and longing for an opportunity to meet the hated invaders at close quarters. The noisy shells have long since ceased to frighten. The rout of the landing-party at Sidi Said, described elsewhere, was planned by Moussa Bey, who has disciplined his Arab allies so well that they controlled their fire till the opportune moment had occurred—no mean achievement in the eyes of any one who knows the furious impetuosity and "go as you please" tactics of an Arab army!

The other Turkish officers at Zouara were Captain Hassan Effendi—one of the best and kindest of comrades—and two subalterns, one an elderly officer whose honourable service in the ranks had gained him a commission, and the other a Fezzani, a delightful young officer

who spoke French. The older subaltern was a very devout Moslem, and, when he was displeased with an Arab or negro, would seize him and beat him about the head with the flat of his hand, while the victim grinned broadly beneath the old gentleman's mild chastisement.

The little town has been bombarded at least a dozen times since the commencement of hostilities. The Italians were, of course, justified in shelling the barracks, which are clearly visible from the sea and separated at some distance from the houses and mosques which make up the town. But at Zouara and elsewhere the Italian warships have again and again shamefully violated the rule that forbids the bombardment of unfortified towns. As I rode through the streets I saw the marks of the devastation wrought by the projectiles. The Bimbashi's former home in the town—the only house with more than one storey—had been absolutely wrecked by the impact of at least twenty shells, as its height rendered it an easy target. The bases of two of these shells I saw in a neighbouring shop. They were portions of heavy projectiles marked "Lb. 98" and made at Brescia. The Courts of Justice and three or four shops had been struck, the roof of the

mosque was badly holed, and the school had collapsed into a mere stone-heap.

It was difficult to discover what loss, if any, had been occasioned by the shell-fire. The Italians, without giving notice of their intention, in accordance with civilized usage, suddenly opened fire on defenceless Arab houses, and I gathered that two or three women and children had been killed in their attempt to escape from the town. Many of these helpless creatures subsequently found shelter at Rigdalin, and, during my two visits to Zouara, the ordinary life of the town went on regardless of the warships' fire. In the course of one of the later bombardments a little black child playing amongst the palm-trees was instantly killed by a shrapnel bullet.

Every variety of shell seems to have been employed by the enemy in these cowardly bombardments. I saw fragments of big 6-inch shells, shrapnel, percussion shell and armour-piercing projectiles: and I found on the floor of my bedroom a number of large shrapnel bullets, three times the size of the bullets packed in an ordinary 15-pounder shell. At a conservative estimate at least 500 projectiles have been launched against this small Arab town and its barracks during the intermittent

bombardments. The second main attack consisted of shell-fire on five successive days, 28th November to 2nd December, lasting on the first day from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and recommencing on the 29th at dawn.

The soldiers' and officers' quarters had suffered severely. The room I occupied had been completely stripped of every vestige of furniture and fittings by the passage of a shell through the window and the opposite wall, and the building as a whole was disfigured by no less than thirty-five honourable scars, in the shape of big and little holes caused by fragments of shell and shrapnel bullets. The course of one projectile was very interesting. It had torn off the corner of the men's barracks, then cut a palm-tree clean in two, and finally, after striking the ground, had ricochetted violently against our quarters and laid open the outer wall by a gaping fissure.

None of the Turks seemed to be disturbed in the slightest degree by the daily alarms. Nevertheless Zouara was not an ideal residence for any one who wished to enjoy a quiet and reposeful life. At any hour of the day or night a soldier would come up with a report from the group-sentries along the sea-front that an Italian warship was nearing the town. Every-

body at once made for some vast dunes which lay between the buildings and the beach, and formed a splendid barrier against attack from the sea. There the Turks and Arabs lay until either the warship wasted its ammunition overhead or, after a brief reconnaissance, steamed slowly away. Everybody seemed to have an absolute contempt for the missiles. Even though exposed to shrapnel, which the Italians sometimes contrived to burst over the dunes, some of the Turkish soldiers lay down and slept, and the elderly subaltern slumbered peacefully in the open ground, regardless of consequences. But the Arabs watched and cursed the enemy, for they were filled with the bitterest resentment against the destroyer of their houses and date palms. What splendid military material—the type of man who faced unflinchingly our awful fire over the flat desert at Omdurman fourteen years ago; active, handsome fellows, capable of enduring every form of hardship and facing every form of peril in defence of their poor huts and sandy wastes. One of the most foolish stories spread by Italian newspapers is that the Arabs are only fighting because compelled by the Turks. Compulsion indeed! Apart from the numerical proportion of Turks and Arabs, a glance at the

faces of these Arabs when the word "Italiano" is mentioned is enough to disabuse any writer's mind of this belief. The Italians, I am told, dread the Arabs even more than the Turkish regulars, and since their cruel and unjust bombardments of places like Zouara and Akaba the hatred felt by the Arabs has been increased and stereotyped.

Our repose was frequently broken by false alarms. The door suddenly opened at dawn, and Mohammed announced quite unconcernedly, like a Calais waiter, "*Le bateau est arrivé.*" I collected my drowsy thoughts and my clothes and told Mohammed to carry my precious valise to the mosque, as our bedroom was a particularly easy mark for the naval gunners and the loss of one's bedding would be disastrous. Outside, the regulars formed up and marched in column to the dunes, where they deployed and occupied shelter-pits dug in the sand. Creeping to the summit of the dunes I could see the cruiser quite clearly, and the sailors manning its deck. It rode at anchor about 1,500 yards away and looked capable of any devilry in the way of destruction, for the town and its palm-trees lay exposed to its fire without the possibility of reprisals. I have since read statements from an Italian correspondent

in the "Temps" that during a bombardment of Zouara the Italian cruiser was met by "coups de canon." This is either a pure fabrication or else the writer was misled by the noisy "powder play" common in Arab towns. The only piece of ordnance I ever saw at Zouara was a dismounted cannon of small calibre which probably belonged to the period of the "Barbary corsairs." I only wish we had possessed a serviceable field-piece at Zouara, well hidden in the sand-dunes; one well-directed shell might have helped to teach the destroyer that war is not always a safe and one-sided affair.

As we lay on the dunes like military Micawbers, waiting to see what would turn up from the sea, I listened to a good deal of most amusing "camp gup." Stories were told of shrapnel bullets falling "cold" and harmless —a not uncommon experience, for if the shell is burst too far in front of the object aimed at the liberated bullets, travelling only with the velocity of the projectile, may almost be kept off with an umbrella, and have sometimes been known to drop quietly into pockets and haversacks. There were many tales of the feeble results of the heavy shell-fire: one of the bombardments had caused the death of two sheep

and a snake! The snake did indeed lie dead on the crest of the dune, but I question whether the bombardment was responsible for its demise, unless, indeed, it died of fright. One of these excellent gossips was a polyglot Arnaut (Moslem Albanian) who spoke nearly all the Slavonic tongues as well as Turkish and some Arabic. He was loud in his praises of Bucharest, his favourite city, but at the same time spoke with some little envy in his voice of a brother who, in a vast "fabrik" of Chicago, was earning a "golden lira" a day. He was anxious to hear all about the English soldier, his food, wages, etc., and when I told him of the pay of his own rank ("onbashi"=corporal) in the British Army he held up his hands out of the rifle-pit in amazement.

The Red Crescent party pushed on at once towards Azizieh and Captain Bettelheim went with them, but for various reasons I remained at Zouara for three days and found my sojourn there full of interest, for this oasis on the edge of the sea was by far the most beautiful place I saw on the plains of Tripoli. Captain Hassan Effendi was most kind to Mr. Abbott and myself, and placed his servant, a Greek-speaking Moslem from Salonika, at our disposal. This young man was an excellent cook;

she served up delicious *pilaffs* and roasted a chicken to a turn, and as a maker of Turkish coffee was almost μείζων ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον. On the day before we left, poor Hassan Effendi became very unwell with a kind of ague, but after taking his temperature and finding it normal, I set out for the market to buy a fowl from which to concoct some chicken broth for the invalid. I secured a lean hen for fr. 1.25 and ½ lb. of peas and twelve eggs for 75 centimes—so food was not at war prices in Zouara. The fowl and dish containing the pulse and eggs was conveyed to barracks by an intelligent Arab urchin, and *en route* the hen was permitted to eat freely of the peas, as I wished its last hours to be as comparatively happy as possible. There was no doctor at Zouara, for, after the first bombardment, the military surgeon, a Greek, had withdrawn to Rigdalin with the refugees. After our meal I took a farewell stroll among the palm-trees. The sun had gone down in a blaze of splendour and the silence was broken only by the chirping of the tree-crickets and the occasional bark of an Arab dog in the town. The planet Mars blazed redly in the sky, and so clear was the moonlight that although the lamps had been extinguished

in the barracks, the buildings were easily visible from the sea. I climbed to the crest of the dunes and was promptly challenged by a sentry. Nowhere, I may add, in Tripoli did I see the ordinary military duties of a camp carried out so systematically as in Moussa Bey's command. The cruiser lay like some huge black monster gently rolling in the swell. When I returned I showed the Commandant a kindly letter of introduction from the Turkish Embassy, and when I bid him farewell and thanked him, and wished him and his gallant men success, he kissed me on both cheeks.

Mr. Abbott, B—— and myself left Zouara at 8 p.m., and travelled through the night to Azilat, with two officers who had crossed the frontier the day before. One of them, Artif Bey, Captain in the 38th Cavalry, looked very smart in a bright red jersey: the other, an artillery officer, was an Arab from Mesopotamia. They were both charming companions, and it was my good fortune to see a great deal subsequently of Artif Bey, whose clever scouting was of great value to the army. The night was lovely, and, as we had no horses and riding on baggage camels is tedious B—— and I covered the whole of the 40 kilometres on foot: but walking was

difficult in places, and on reaching Azilat we found that the final two miles of our course ran over the loose surface of gigantic sand-dunes. It was 6 a.m. before we finally threw ourselves down on some mats in the konak of Azilat for three hours' sleep. Night travelling is a mistake in a long journey of successive stages. One's system of living seemed put out of gear: the necessary sleep must be attempted in daylight—no easy task in an Arab community. People who return from a London dance at 4 a.m. can guarantee a bedroom darkened by curtains and more or less free from disturbing sounds. But camels, men, and sunshine combine to render daylight slumbers almost impossible.

We could not get away from Azilat until midday, and our camels were dreadfully slow. At one moment we lost them altogether for a couple of hours. These camels had curious marks branded on their necks. I have noticed the same thing in other parts of the East: camel marks have been borrowed from various non-Arabic sources. In Socotra, for example, nearly all the brands were ancient Himyaritic letters. The use, in classical times, of two obsolete Greek letters for horse-branding affords an interesting parallel. At Zouara

Arab youngsters were playing at hopscotch over the same figure drawn in the sand which can be seen any day in an English town or village. I found the same pattern on the sea beach in remote Socotra. The antiquity of some children's games is very great, and formulæ like "Eena, deena," etc., and "Hickory, dickory, dock," are Sanskrit or other numerals, more or less thinly disguised.

The route from Azilat to Xavia was much more attractive than that of the previous night, as it lay over undulating ground, occupied at intervals by pretty groves of palm-trees, figs, and tamarisks. At 8 o'clock gardens, dogs, and powder play led us to think that we had reached our journey's end, but to our dismay we learnt that the town before us was Surman, and that another three hours' journey lay between us and Xavia. Loud wails and lamentations filled the air—the mourning of hundreds of men and women over a dead Arab, killed in the fighting, whose body had been brought back to his home. During our halt at Surman I was sitting with the two officers in a tiny room belonging to the gendarmerie, when the conversation turned on revolvers. Artif Bey was interested in my Steyhr automatic pistol, and then proceeded to show me his large-bore

Colt. As he was putting it back in his pocket he accidentally pressed the trigger. The big bullet chipped a hole in the stone floor within an inch of my foot, the lamp was suddenly extinguished, and in the darkness a small Arab child uttered dismal cries. I struck a match, and to our great relief we found that the little girl was little the worse: some splinters from the floor had struck her sharply on her bare legs, and she was terrified by the loud explosion and the darkness. Both she and I had a very narrow escape. We wearily resumed our march, and after leaving the outskirts of the village crossed a marsh covered by a light mist, and made for a belt of palm-trees. A curlew cried plaintively near the beach, and startled red-shanks sped away with a shrill note. On the pools I noticed a few duck, which showed no signs of alarm. The oasis beyond the marsh was magnificent. The tall and graceful trees were bathed in moonlight, and in their long rows looked like the pillars of some vast primeval temple. Never before had I seen such majestic date-palms, and the whole region roundabout appeared to be exceedingly fertile. Tamarisks, fig-trees, peaches, and winter barley were visible on every side, between hedges of giant cactus, from which the poor tired camels

now and then managed to snatch a prickly but succulent morsel. The towns and villages of Tripoli are the "doggiest" places I have ever come across. Our approach was always heralded by a pandemonium of barks long before we even reached the outskirts of the town, and during our passage through the streets these little white dogs, with chow-like faces, leapt upon the mud walls and barked ferociously. There is practically nothing in Tripoli for them to catch, but as watch-dogs pure and simple they are very effective.

Oh, how glad we were when the big, dilapidated konak came in sight! A tired gendarme, roused from his sleep, worked his hardest to make us comfortable by finding us a brazier and some decent water for our tea—that best of all drinks for the traveller. With the exception of the school, the public buildings of Xavia were in a dreadfully tumble-down condition—typical, indeed, of this poor, neglected vilayet, which has for years been run at a considerable loss to the Turkish exchequer.

Next morning great noise and uproar reigned in the square. Five hundred Arabs had collected, and were setting out in the afternoon to join Nesciat Bey's army. I was

given a chair beside the Commandant and the Kaimakam (civil governor), and up came the band and two flags. I saluted the colours, and the musicians—a negro, who played bagpipes and danced to his own music, and several small drummers—gave a "command performance." This Eastern music is, I suppose, arranged on a different scale altogether from ours: at any rate, it possesses little attraction for Western ears. And when I have seen scores of Oriental undergraduates at our Balliol concerts in Oxford, I have often wondered if they in their turn could feel any real appreciation for a type of music so utterly foreign to their own.

The Bimbashi informed me that a thousand Arabs had been raised from the neighbourhood of Xavia, and he furnished me with other figures for various localities. I felt sure, of course, that he spoke in good faith, but at the same time it must be admitted that, many as are the good qualities of the Turk, statistics is not his *forte*. There is, *e.g.*, no official census of the Ottoman Empire except the taxation rolls, which are based on the number of houses, each house being supposed to contain five persons. For the existence of this guesswork system I cannot personally vouch, but

I was informed of it by a gentleman who was formerly a resident in Asia Minor.

From Xavia we marched through the hot sunshine towards a low ridge in the distance, where after lunch I secured two interesting specimens, now, I trust, in the Hope Museum at Oxford—a black-and-white beetle and a very large and repulsive insect of the "tick" tribe, which bore an exact resemblance to the Martians of Mr. Wells's romance—a loathsome fat body, with short, waving legs. Suddenly a party of Arabs arrived on the scene, sent after us by the Commandant "as an escort against the Italian dogs." These cheerful irregulars, all of whom, except one, carried Mausers or Martinis, were controlled by a leader who rated them soundly at intervals. They frequently blazed away at flocks of small birds and once at a gorged vulture sitting on a hillock 200 yards away. Nothing, however, was bagged, and I suggested to the leader that it was a pity to waste the Sultan's ammunition as it was difficult to replenish it, and that it would be much better to keep it for the Italians. He took the same view, and ordered this wasteful expenditure of ammunition to cease, which incidentally rendered the journey much safer for all of

us. As we reached Bir Terin, our bivouac for the night, the gleaming searchlight of an Italian cruiser swept over the desert and caught our little caravan in the arc of its faint radiance.

The sight of the poor Arabs silhouetted against the electric rays saddened me. Searchlights, Maxims, batteries, warships, aeroplanes —the odds seemed so terrible! But these sons of the desert, with their rags and their rifles, have, after all, the essential quality—they are not afraid to die. With anything like equality in military equipment, I doubt if any European troops could stand against these Arabs. It is not so much that more civilized peoples fear death—death rarely comes as the King of Terrors—but they want to go on living because life is pleasant. Education, culture, easy transit, cheap amusements, personal security, the protection of good laws—all these features of a civilized community tend more and more to make life comfortable and happy. Europeans grow less and less content to endure preventable misery in this life on the strength of "blank cheques to be cashed on the other side of Jordan." The cry of the workers—from whom our armies are recruited—is "Greater comfort,

happier lives." And these they mean to get. I believe, therefore, that as regards fighting of the old reckless type—the "forlorn hope," the headlong rush upon trenches and wire entanglements, the capture of guns by charging cavalry, and so on—the highly civilized races will sooner or later be "played out," though they may be able to hold their own against fighters like the Arabs by the devilish ingenuity and efficiency of their weapons. The poor nomads of Tripoli are still in the reckless stage of warfare, for their lives are so hard and poverty-stricken that death loses much of its bitterness, and, further, they not only sing about the joys of Paradise, but verily believe in them.

The fonduk of Bir Terin was so crowded and dirty that I pitched my tent outside on the sand, despite sinister rumours of possible raids by Bedouins in the pay of Italy. The baggage was soaked by the heavy moisture of the night, and several of the Arabs tried to keep dry within the heavy folds of cavalry cloaks taken from dead Italians. I have little sympathy with the sentimental objection sometimes brought against "stripping the dead." If clothes and boots are badly needed by the living, why on earth bury them in the ground?

My little tent, like the roses of "L'Allegro," was thoroughly "washed in dew," and so nicely cleaned for my arrival in camp. We fell asleep in the knowledge that to-morrow's brief stage of four hours would end our wanderings for the present.

CHAPTER III

THE COURSE OF THE CAMPAIGN

THE Italian ultimatum, giving a time limit of twenty-four hours, was dispatched on the 27th September and on the 29th a state of war existed between the Kingdom of Italy and the Ottoman Empire. Four days afterwards the forts of Tripoli were bombarded by a powerful Italian fleet. A few artillerymen had been left behind in the town to serve the Krupps in the forts, but as the range of their guns was at best 5½ miles, while the heavy ordnance of the warships possessed an effective range of 7, not a single shell fired from the land ever reached the fleet. The Italian ships, manned by crews enjoying complete immunity from risk, with a series of easy targets in front of them, made indifferent practice on the forts, the useless fire of which soon ceased.

The Turkish forces had already withdrawn

from Tripoli. Their notice to quit had been rendered all the briefer by the fact that the telegram from Constantinople had been seriously delayed. Nesciat Bey, in the few hours at his disposal, did wonders. His little force marched out to Gargaresch for the night and next day retired farther inland to Ain Zara. The rifles and ammunition fortunately brought by the transport "Derna" a few days before the ultimatum, had been already distributed amongst the Arabs. The Krupps in the shore batteries were of course left, and these with their ammunition were triumphantly "captured" by the Italians. Some field-guns also, for which no transport was available, had to be left. Nesciat Bey wisely concentrated all his efforts on the carrying away of all the rifle cartridges he possessed.

The way was now clear for the disembarkation of the expeditionary force, and as the various regiments and batteries were landed they took up their position in a line of trenches which stretched from Fort Sultana to Fort Hamidieh and covered nearly 10 miles of front. The original intention of General Caneva was apparently to entrench himself much nearer to the town walls, but the vital necessity of securing the all-important

water supply of Bou-Meliana ("Father of overflowing") led him to push his lines further out among the palm-trees.

Every campaign, however obscure or remote, usually provides lessons in the great experimental school of modern warfare. From this point of view the people of Great Britain, despite their general indifference towards questions of foreign policy or national defence, ought to find one feature of the campaign which is of supreme importance to themselves. The whole scheme of our defence against invasion has hitherto turned on the question of the probable size of the army brought against our shores. Liberal and Conservative Governments alike, relying of course upon the advice of their military experts, have placed the maximum of the invading force at 70,000 men. A most interesting article appeared some time ago in the "Contemporary Review" from the pen of "Master Mariner," in which this able writer clearly demonstrated the insuperable difficulties attached to the transport and disembarkation of this hypothetical force in the face of even comparatively feeble opposition on sea or land. Every contention of this article has been fully borne out by the experience of Italy in Tripoli. Here was

a nation which enjoyed undisputed command of the sea, and over a million tons of shipping were ready for transport purposes. Her objective, the port of Tripoli, was only 28 hours' steam from Syracuse. The expeditionary force numbered two divisions, *i.e.*, some 25,000 men all told. The ultimatum was dispatched on September 27th, and a state of war commenced on the 29th. Nevertheless —and this is the all-important point—the disembarkation of the troops was not completed until that fatal day, October 23rd, *i.e.*, 3½ weeks after the delivery of the ultimatum! What then, as Mr. Hind appositely asks in the "Fortnightly Review" for January, becomes of the "compulsory service" contention that not merely 70,000, but even 120,000 of Germany's trained legionaries might be suddenly let loose in a few hours upon the shores of England?

It was in front of Bou-Meliana on October 10th that the rival forces first met face to face. It was a trifling affair, a night reconnaissance in front of the Italian position made by about 250 Turks, but the Italian journals went into raptures over it, and wrote of this petty skirmish as if it had been a Jena or an Austerlitz. One emotional gentleman on

this occasion eclipsed all his confrères. He wrote that on the approach of the Turks in the moonlight—he puts the number at 300—he climbed a palm-tree: but owing to the "terrific" and deadly fire opened by the enemy—not a single Italian was even grazed—he speedily descended from his perch. This correspondent actually went on to say that "at least half" of the Turks must have been "killed or seriously wounded" by the Italian fire, and apparently believes—inasmuch as only one Turk was found next day—that the 150 unwounded men each carried off a dead or wounded comrade! It really is an insult to the readers of our newspapers that ignorant and inexperienced persons of this type should masquerade as war-correspondents. There is another regrettable tendency in some modern correspondents—a species of megalomania which fills the pages of our illustrated papers with photographs of the journalist himself in all sorts of postures and attitudes. I remember a silly full-page drawing of a correspondent who was supposed to be wrangling with the driver of his carriage over the fare while "under fire." Anybody of real experience knows perfectly well that neither correspondents nor cabmen remain

bolt upright when the air is filled with the *ispt, ispt* of bullets. The hero of this picture proudly relates that he always drove in a "cab" to the battlefield, and that he secured the cab by calling out "Hi, Johnnie, to the front!" Some readers may find this humorous —perhaps the same people who interviewed the gentleman in question on his return and asked him "what it felt like to be under fire," but one would think that a person of ordinary intelligence might take the trouble in Tripoli to learn enough Arabic to call a carriage, and find out beforehand the cost of the journey. The men of genuine experience and real knowledge of war—men like Bennet Burleigh and Seppings-Wright—do not write in this vein of childish egotism. There is a dignity and restraint about their work which is lacking in much of the "copy" dispatched from Tripoli in the present campaign. I have alluded elsewhere to the wild statistics indulged in throughout the war. Correspondents like the representative of the Central News at Rome have already slain every Turkish soldier in Tripolitania several times over!

Let me give one further example. During the first week of November, the Italians made an attempt with an absolutely overwhelming

force to regain some of the oasis they had abandoned on October 27th. An Italian correspondent writes the most inflated nonsense about this "magnificent advance, carried out with order, rapidity, and daring. The ground was black with soldiers . . . like a vast ant-hill. As the battle (*sic*) advanced . . . it was marvellous to watch these soldiers who fought like veterans. *The scene was like one of those classical attacks made by the Japanese.* The men worked in twos, one man digging up the soil with his bayonet, while the other opened fire. When a sufficiently large hole had been made both men crept into it and continued shooting. . . . At twilight the firing ceased . . . and away towards the town . . . rose a large and loud shout of 'Viva Italia'!"

The above is a specimen of the effeminate twaddle which forms the war *pabulum* of the Italian newspapers. If the modern journalist employs such language to describe a trifling skirmish, one wonders what he could write about serious warfare. How the Japanese must laugh at these Italian analogies! The wonderful assaults which carried the defences of Port Arthur and worsted the troops of a first-class military Power at Mukden are com-

pared to the timid skirmishing of an enormous force[1] faced by a handful of undisciplined Arabs! Fancy the idea of Japanese troops under such circumstances stopping to dig holes and creep into them!

The rainfall during the earlier weeks of the campaign was phenomenally high. Nothing like it had been experienced in Tripoli for many years. In the confusion and hurry of the evacuation very few tents had been brought away by the Turkish troops, and although later on they secured a number of Arab tents made of camel-hair cloth, the poor fellows at the time of the worst downpours were frequently without any kind of shelter. Camp fires were often impossible, and men tried to sleep on the sodden ground, their uniforms soaked with moisture, and nothing between them and the bitter cold of the evening except a dripping blanket. On November 13th the swollen torrent of the Wady Medjenin burst its banks, and sweeping down to the sea, flooded the Italian trenches. A corporal was drowned, and many men were

[1] By the 2nd of December the Italian troops in Tripolitania had reached a grand total of 120,000 men—70,000 at Tripoli, 25,000 at Benghazi, 15,000 at Derna, and 5,000 at each of the two ports, Khoms and Tobruk!

only saved by clutching at planks and ropes thrown to them by their comrades.

On the 15th November a terrific gale, with a deluge of rain, swept over Tripoli, and in the dark, tempestuous night a body of Turks and Arabs cleverly surrounded an Italian outpost outside Bou-Meliana. The enemy, taken by surprise, bolted towards the lines, leaving behind them several field-guns and a quantity of rifle ammunition.

This was a sample of the minor assaults made against the Italian lines during October and November. The enemy's outposts frequently occupied empty houses for shelter and protection. The Arabs would suddenly rush upon them, and the Italians would either bolt or else block up the doorway. "In this case," said an officer who led the Arabs, "if we found it difficult to get at the enemy, we would bring a field-gun into position at close range and blow a hole in the wall of the house, while the Arabs threw themselves flat on the ground as the shell whizzed a few feet over their heads and fragments of the wall fell over them, sometimes inflicting wounds, and even serious wounds. Then the Arabs would rush in, and it was all up with any Italians who failed to slip past them. In one house we slew nine

in a lump." It is easy to understand how the unseasoned, neurotic Italians, left on outpost duty amongst the dark shadows of the palm-trees, were filled with an absolute dread of the terrible assailants, who would suddenly rise up from, apparently, nowhere, and launch themselves with frenzied shouts upon the infidels. This sort of fighting would indeed tax the nerves of the best troops in the world; and the Italian pickets usually took the more prudent course of bolting like rabbits. Woe betide the flying soldier if the agile Arabs cut off his escape. His magazine empty, or his rifle dropped in the dark, the wretched soldier would try one last expedient as the ghostly forms with the curved knives closed upon him, and the startling words "La Allah ila Allah wa Muhammad Rasul Allah!" would issue in a despairing yell from the lips of the poor *giaour*.

These night rushes by Arabs are always formidable. How well I remember, as I lay on the sand within our zeriba at Omdurman, a remark of Mr. Frederic Villiers: "Well, if the dervishes attack us to-night, we shall all be cold meat in the morning." I am quite convinced that he was right, and that if the Khalifa's warriors had rushed the Anglo-Egyptian Army in the dark, nothing that

gunboats, batteries, Maxims, or rifle-fire could do would have kept them from swarming over the feeble defences. The frenzied dervishes once inside, our rifle-fire would have been almost impossible, and at cut-and-thrust work the Arab is more than a match for the European soldier. But for the insensate folly of the Khalifa in deferring his assault until daylight doomed it to failure, I am firmly convinced that we should have met our Adowa on the banks of the Nile, and that few indeed except the crews of the gunboats would have lived to tell the story. In the forces which besiege Benghazi there is at present serving the Emir Suleiman, a Hungarian, who commanded a body of Arabs at the Battle of Omdurman. How much I should have liked to meet him and listen to his experiences of the great fight, from the carnage of which he managed somehow or other to escape.

A very graphic account of an attack on the Italian lines was given by an Arab to M. de Zorg, the correspondent of the "Temps" with the Ottoman forces. I met this same Arab at Zouara: he had been disabled for a time by a slight bullet wound, received in one of many attacks near Fort Mesri, and had subsequently returned to his home at Zouara. His naïve

account is interesting because it is exactly typical of the methods by which the enemy's outposts and trenches were constantly harassed until the arrival of large reinforcements and better weather forced the Italians for very shame to begin some sort of forward movement on November 26th. Here is the Arab's simple tale: "The Italians hid themselves in holes and fired at us without our being able to see them. So at night the Turkish officers made the Arabs, too, dig holes for themselves. Then, one morning, all the Arabs rushed upon the Italians; but they, with some big guns which went *pan-pan-pan* (Maxims), slew many of the Arabs. Nevertheless, the Arabs chased the Italians from their holes, and there they found guns and cartridges and the big guns that go *pan-pan-pan*; but as they could not make use of these (Maxims) they left them there." This Arab was proud of showing his trophies at Zouara. I saw his rifle, made at Torre Annunziata, and amongst other loot shown to M. de Zorg and Captain Bettelheim was "un pantalon de femme aux grossiers festons." How this last article found its way into the Italian trenches is indeed a mystery.

The famous frontal attack on October 23rd —the immediate prelude to the oasis massacres

—was in itself a trumpery affair, and would have given very little trouble to English or French troops. In the morning of that day a small band of Arabs, certainly not more than a couple of hundred all told, delivered one of their usual assaults on the Italian trenches. But whilst the enemy were engaged in repelling these assailants in front, shots were suddenly heard behind them, and some men began to fall. The Italians realized that they were taken in rear—never a pleasant thought even for the best troops! The number of the Arabs who actually fired from the oasis itself has been absurdly exaggerated. If one is to judge from the reports of experienced English and German correspondents, 500 would seem to be an outside estimate, and had the invaders kept their heads the enormous forces at their disposal should have easily beaten off the rear attack. As it was, two companies of Bersaglieri were hemmed in, and after a desperate and gallant resistance perished almost to a man. But for the moment something like a general panic appears to have affected the Italian forces, and if Nesciat Bey could have followed up his success by sending, say, 5,000 men through the broken lines, I doubt if very much would have been left of the "Army of

Occupation." The troubles of the Italians were accentuated about midday by a further revolt of Arabs in the town; but by this time they had begun to pull themselves together, and the survivors of the few hundred Arabs who had spread this dire confusion in their ranks were dispersed or destroyed by sheer weight of numbers.

Then followed the hideous reprisals in the oasis, which continued until on the 28th an order from General Caneva prohibited any further slaughter. The whole subject of the oasis massacres has been dealt with so exhaustively in the European Press that I do not propose to discuss the matter in these pages, though I have referred to the question from the point of view of the laws of war in another place. I will only add the testimony of a witness on whose veracity I can absolutely rely. One of the three deputies for Tripoli town in the Ottoman Parliament told me that with his own eyes he had seen four women and three children tied together, all of them killed by deep cuts on the back of their necks. The deputy was an educated and cultured man, and added that but for such atrocities he would have respected the Italians as enemies: but who, said he, could

feel any respect for disciplined troops guilty of such infamous murders?

The Italian General believed, or affected to believe—the wish was, I fancy, father to the thought—that by some astonishing metamorphosis the Arabs in the oasis had, in virtue of some proclamation which 99 per cent. of them never even saw, suddenly abandoned their allegiance to their creed, their country, and their Khalif. If this conviction was seriously entertained, it affords one more indication of the stupidity and miscalculation which has distinguished this Italian enterprise from the commencement. However, if General Caneva and his officers believe that the natives in the vast oasis had surrendered their rifles and made their submission, they had a rude awakening on the 23rd, and, from their point of view, great provocation. A forcible disarmament of all the Arabs, the trial and punishment of any who had taken up arms after actual submission, the deportation of any still under suspicion—any of these courses of action would have been reasonable. No possible justification can be found for General Caneva's monstrous conduct in allowing the rank and file of his army to carry out indiscriminate reprisals for three or four days.

This officer will leave behind him in Tripoli and the whole Moslem world a name of blood-guiltiness, to be accursed from generation to generation. The history of the Italian Army is adorned with few indeed of the laurels of victory, but its records might at least have remained unsullied by brutal and cowardly massacres.

On the 26th October a fresh assault was delivered by small bodies of Arabs all along the line. But at one point a little to the west of the Cavalry Barracks the fight was quite Homeric in the hand-to-hand ferocity of the mingled combatants. A good deal of "scrapping" had been going on, and in the evening many of the Italian infantry lay sleeping in the trenches, worn out by a long and arduous day. Suddenly a body of 250 Arabs who had crept like snakes over the sand threw themselves on their half-dazed opponents. The curved knives did terrible execution, and many Italians were roused from sleep merely to die. The lines were broken, and some of the assailants formed up inside the oasis and fired into the rear of the 84th Regiment. One of the companies lost half its men, and in every direction lay little heaps of dead and wounded men.

The assailants were at length checked by the appearance of some dismounted cavalry, a battalion of the 82nd Regiment, four companies of the 4th and 40th Regiments with Maxims and two batteries of field and naval guns—all this to beat back 250 men! Under pressure of the tremendous counter-attack the Arabs suffered heavily: in fact, it seems doubtful if more than a mere handful of the devoted 250 ever returned to Ain Zara, though some remained in the oasis and returned to their homes, which they had regained by so terrible a route. To add to the awful confusion and horror of this bloody evening, an Italian battery fired rounds of shrapnel upon the intermingled crowd of friends and foes alike. Mr. Ashmead Bartlett states that 30 Arabs who had barricaded themselves in some houses on the edge of the oasis could not be dislodged until on the 28th they were blown up by explosives. Between the Cavalry Barracks and the sea four battalions of infantry, including the famous 11th Bersaglieri with a number of guns, were engaged all day in repulsing the attacks of small bodies of Arabs. So close was the fighting that shrapnel timed to burst at the muzzle was fired at a range of 200 yards—surely a record in modern warfare!

All this had been accomplished by a tiny band of less than 300 Arabs. What is to happen if Nesciat Bey one evening launches 5,000 Arabs against the Italian lines? And what would have happened if the revolt in the oasis had only been delayed for three more days until the successful attack on the 26th?

General Caneva and his staff were profoundly impressed by the events of the 26th, and it was officially stated that the lines would be withdrawn farther towards the city "because of the effluvium from the unburied corpses." This excuse is on a par with the reason alleged for the failure to land troops in Asia Minor or Arabia. This forbearance is due, forsooth, to a scrupulous regard for European susceptibilities! The Sultan's troops would be only too glad if Italian soldiers were disembarked in these regions. I do not think that many of the visitors would ever get back to their macaroni and Chianti!

The Italian lines were accordingly contracted. The eastern trenches from a point opposite Meşri to the sea were abandoned and fresh earthworks were thrown up from two to three kilometres nearer the town. It is difficult to find any adequate justification

for this move from a military point of view. It was an obvious acknowledgment of defeat incurred at the hands of 250 assailants; it helped to accentuate any alarm or misgivings amongst the Italian troops; it greatly encouraged the Ottoman forces, and greatly diminished the area—already none too large—available for the camp of 30,000 troops with actual cases of cholera in their midst.

In the first week of November a further disaster overtook the Italians on the coast near Fort Hamidieh. Some fresh troops had arrived from Sicily, including apparently the 93rd Regiment, and under escort from the fleet these reinforcements attempted to land in the neighbourhood of Sharashet. The Arabs who occupied this district testified to the courage shown by the invaders on this occasion, but of the total force only 200 succeeded in actually disembarking, and these were immediately attacked. As far as one could gather from the accounts of the prisoners and the reports at headquarters, the 200 Italians, fighting with the courage of despair, were completely hemmed in by the Arabs and finally "rushed" and cut to pieces. The five prisoners who somehow or other managed to escape the general carnage were subsequently brought to

Gharian disguised as Turks, and there I saw them on Christmas Day.

By November 7th the arrival of additional troops had brought General Frugoni's army in Tripoli town up to at least 30,000 effectives, but any projected advance was delayed by the heavy rains, which converted the trenches and rifle-pits into pools, and made the movement of guns or ammunition-carts almost impossible even for a short distance. At length, on the 26th, the huge machine of the Italian armaments was put into motion, and a large force pushed forward in order to recapture the eastern portion of the oasis, abandoned in the general panic of October 26th, exactly a month before. One brigade advanced to cover Ain Zara and prevent any co-operation with the oasis Arabs on the part of the Turks there encamped. On the eastern side a formidable brigade of three infantry regiments, two squadrons of cavalry, twelve field-guns and two mountain batteries formed a cordon from the coast to the Cavalry Barracks, and gradually, by sheer force of numbers, pushed back the scattered bands of Arabs who were occupying the abandoned strip of oasis. The onward march of the Italians was stoutly contested inch by inch, and the expulsion of the Arabs

cost the Italians 120 casualties. However, by the end of the day the invaders had regained their old position—which they ought never to have abandoned—and their lines now included the Cavalry Barracks, the Agricultural School, and the village of Sharashet. Henni was not yet occupied nor had the Italians as yet captured Fort Mesri. They had succeeded in occupying a building within a stone's-throw of the so-called fort, and Turks and Italians faced each other for some days at ridiculously close quarters.

It was after the fight on the 26th that the Italians came across a number of bodies which had been mutilated. Some corpses had been partially interred, and it was rather hastily assumed that in this case captives had been buried alive. This does not follow at all. The Turks may quite naturally have buried dead Italians for hygienic reasons, and interment in war is frequently a hasty and inadequate performance. At the top of the Belmont Kopje were Boer corpses partially buried, whose heads or feet remained above the surface. Further, as a writer in "Blackwood" points out, it is incredible that many of the detailed features of the alleged tortures could have remained after a month's exposure to a hot

sun and a succession of torrential rainfalls. Still, all said and done, it seems quite clear that some of the Italian dead had been shockingly mutilated. The Turkish regulars of course had nothing to do with these deplorable excesses: there is nothing of the brute about these soldiers of the Sultan. The mutilations were obviously the work of Arabs. No one could possibly justify or seek to justify such deeds. Nevertheless the outcries of horror and execration raised in Italy over these mutilations had a certain flavour of unreality and hypocrisy about them. A nation which justifies the indiscriminate massacre of four thousand people, including even women and children, when carried out by its "Christian" soldiery, has indeed little claim to protest against the mutilation of a few dead bodies at the hands of poor, ignorant, fanatical Arabs.

Emboldened by their successful eviction of the Arabs from the western half of the Tripoli oasis, the invaders carried out a more ambitious advance on December 4th. Before dawn on that day the Turkish camp at Ain Zara and the various positions held by the Arabs round the town were subjected to a terrific and concentrated bombardment by the guns of the warships. Three Italian columns took part in

the action, which was fought in the midst of heavy rain. One column remained in reserve at Sidi Mesri, and a second was hotly engaged all day with the Arabs, who delivered a series of violent attacks from their positions east of the Turkish camp, and by nightfall had practically compelled the Italians to fall back on their lines. On the Italian right a full division of 15,000 men advanced with the obvious intention of turning the weakly-defended left flank of the Ain Zara force. All the reports about "assaults" on Ain Zara, or the forcible capture of field-guns by the "impetuosity" of the Bersaglieri, and so forth, are ridiculous fabrications. Equally absurd is the estimate that 8,000 men were driven from Ain Zara. If 8,000, or half 8,000, had been in position at that place they would gladly have waited for the arrival of 15,000 Italians, and even gone to meet them! What happened was simply this. When the Turkish commander realized that this overwhelming force was moving past his left, and would soon be actually in his rear, he took, in view of his smaller numbers, the only possible course and ordered a retirement. At 4 p.m. the Turks retired in a leisurely way to their present lines. When Nesciat's orders were conveyed to the Arabs on the right they

were received with loud protests, for these desert fighters had more than held their own and thoroughly disliked the idea of retiring. The Italians are always great at the capture of abandoned guns: there were some guns left behind at Tripoli which they kept on capturing and photographing for weeks. In the present action the Turks abandoned eight field-guns for the simple reason that they had no more ammunition for them, and it was quite impossible to move them over the desert. It takes nineteen horses to drag a 15-pounder gun in Tripoli, and scores of men are required to place one in position.

Before the evacuation of Ain Zara, however, the field-guns in question were rendered useless to the enemy. The huge force of 15,000 Italians never made the slightest move to cut off or harass the retiring Turks. What were their cavalry doing? Can one imagine that any European army, except the Italian, would have actually permitted a small body of opponents to retire over open ground without any attempt whatever to hamper the retreat by cavalry attacks? Instead of this the 15,000 warriors "rushed" the empty camp and captured the abandoned guns, some beds, and other odds and ends of furni-

ture. The Turks knew the sort of stuff their assailants were composed of, and made their way without hurry or confusion to the positions they at present occupy. The staff and a portion of the retiring force continued their march until they reached Azizieh at midnight.

Nesciat Bey was compelled to withdraw from Ain Zara by the sheer pressure of the turning movement on his left. But there was another reason why, sooner or later, the Turkish positions would have been withdrawn further into the desert. The incessant bombardment of the naval guns gave the Ottoman forces no rest by day or night. Arabs, again, are only too ready to get to close quarters with the enemy on any conceivable occasion, but they never got used to the infernal rain of shells. It was not so much the actual damage inflicted by the projectiles which disturbed them—for the bark of shells is always far worse than their bite—but the reverberation of the air, the deafening explosion, and, above all, the clouds of dust caused by the impact of a percussion shell—these things alarmed and disquieted the Arabs. I have heard them talk excitedly of the appalling burst of a monster 12-inch shell, and the vast hole it ploughed in the sand. As the missile in ques-

tion injured nobody, it formed a rather expensive method of scaring the poor Bedouins! In their present position the Ottoman troops are beyond the effective range of the naval guns, and the successful onslaught near Fonduk Bengashir proves how ready they are to meet any forces the Italian General can send against them. The Turkish outposts are, of course, much closer to Tripoli than the main lines; how close can be realized from a recent attack (January 20th) on Gargaresch, when the Italians were driven back with a loss of 50 men from some earthworks in process of construction outside the village.

Urgent news reached headquarters early on December 17th that the Italians had commenced a forward movement on their right. Nesciat Bey and his staff at once rode off to Senit Beni-Adam. The news was correct. Shortly after daybreak on the day in question an Italian column left the line of trenches near Fort C and moved westwards along the Gargaresch road. This "reconnaissance in force" was composed of the 50th Infantry Regiment and a portion of the 73rd, with four squadrons of cavalry and a battery of mule guns. The brigade moved cautiously along, and at length reached Sansur, which was

"occupied" by a small Turkish picket of four men, who retired. The Italians, having "captured" Sansur, destroyed the telegraph office and cut the wire. The Italians are surely the only troops in the world who would have waited more than two months before they could summon up courage for this obvious and easy enterprise! The severance of this line broke off telegraphic communication with Zouara; but the damage was subsequently repaired, and I rode into Xavia with a man who carried with him £10 in order to cover the expense. Advancing gingerly to the south of Sansur, the reconnoitring force suddenly found themselves face to face with an outpost of Turkish regulars twenty in number. One of the twenty had, on the approach of the Italians, been dispatched with a report to Senit Beni-Adam. The remaining nineteen stood their ground and opened fire on the enemy, who thereupon retired *en masse!* I was in the Turkish lines at the time, and everybody, officers and men alike, was highly amused at the almost incredible timidity of the assailants. We were all longing to see them advance against Senit Beni-Adam. No such luck! All we saw was fifteen shells rushing over the desert from the retiring mule battery

and bursting 1,000 yards in front of the camp—a sheer waste of ammunition. It was found the same evening that Sansur had been evacuated and that the Italians had once more retired within the shelter of their trenches. The Malta correspondent of the "Morning Post" makes a ridiculous comment on this reconnaissance. He remarks that "the importance of this advance lies in the fact that by it the smuggling of arms into Tripoli from the west has been rendered impossible for the future." How a march to Sansur and back and the explosion of fifteen shrapnel in the air could produce such a result he does not explain.

A considerable force of Arabs had been gradually collected at Senit Beni-Adam about December 16th with a view, I believe, to an attack on Tripoli. But on the 19th the Ottoman forces were, so to speak, saved the trouble of finding the Italians by the fact that a second advance of the enemy on a larger scale took place on the eastern side. For some time after the turning of the Turkish left on December 4th, and the consequent removal of their headquarters to Azizieh, the Italians appear to have been living in a fool's paradise of security. Officers and correspondents talked glibly about "no more fighting until we find

ourselves in the Gharian Mountains." Ain Zara was turned into a miniature fortress; planks by hundreds were formed into rough parallel stockades and the space between filled with sand and rubble. No less than a division, 14,000 strong, occupied the former head-quarters of the Ottoman forces. Rough weather had, it is true, interfered with the use of aeroplanes for about a week, but the enemy's cavalry ought certainly to have brought in reliable information as to the true facts of the case, viz., that the forces which had given so much trouble up to December 4th were still not only practically intact, but largely augmented along a front whose centre was some 15 miles south of Ain Zara. The belief that little or no opposition could be offered them by what were held to be a number of weak outposts, between Azizieh and Ain Zara, was destined to receive a rude shock. There is an Italian story that on the 18th five Arabs arrived at Ain Zara from the neighbourhood of Tarhouna, with a story that they were exposed to the ravages of Bedouin newly arrived from the interior, and that they besought the aid of the Italians against these depredators. Whether these Arabs were mere decoys dispatched by the Turks, or whether

they were actually seeking the protection of the invaders, I do not know. The bodies of the three who acted as guides to the Italians on this fateful evening were subsequently found riddled with bullets, and it seems practically certain that the enemy, convinced of their guides' treachery, had shot them on the spot. A formidable force was at once detailed under Colonel Fara to proceed southwards to a small oasis called Bir Tobras and clear out the alleged marauders. Long before daylight on the 19th three battalions of infantry, a squadron of cavalry, three mule guns and several Maxims left the trenches at Ain Zara. Some of the infantry belonged to the 11th Regiment of Bersaglieri, whose captured transport wagon I had seen at Azizieh about a fortnight before. Bad luck seems to have dogged the steps of this unfortunate column almost from the start. The track towards Tarhouna is very faintly marked in the desert sand; the men lost their way continually, and in their endeavours to find the proper track marched backwards and forwards, thus incurring much extra fatigue. By this time the Turks at Fonduk Bengashir were well aware of the enemy's advance, and the Arabs already concentrated at this point were speedily reinforced

from a detachment encamped some 7 miles to the west. Without delay, therefore, the Arabs began to harass the Italian column, leaping from dune to dune and firing on the enemy at every opportunity. As the sun rose these attacks increased in number and vigour. The Italians began to lose men and could do little in the way of retaliation against so mobile and invisible an enemy. For some reason, possibly with a view to bring his column on the flank of the Turkish camp at Fonduk Bengashir, Colonel Fara some few kilometres farther on made a sudden turn to his left. By this time the incessant assaults and harassing rifle-fire of the Arabs, with whom were a few Turkish regulars, began to tell on the Italians. Their forward march began to slacken, they halted, and then began to retire. But they had miscalculated time, distance, and direction. At this time of year the sun disappears from view about half-past four, and within an hour all the ways of the desert are darkened. There was no moon, and, in the blackness of the night, illumined only by the flash of the rifles and the play of lightning on the horizon, the Italians altogether lost their way. The Turkish commander had by this time made the best possible use of his Arab

auxiliaries, who had been sent off in batches to work round the flanks and rear of the enemy's brigade. Attacked on every side by almost invisible assailants, whose loud cries of "Allah akbar" rose above the din of battle, the wretched Italians began to give way. Their commander was evidently a man who kept his head, and by dint of great efforts on his part and that of his officers the men were kept more or less together until a piece of rising ground was reached. Colonel Fara determined to remain here for the night; trenches were dug and the mule guns and Maxims unlimbered.

The position of the Italians was, however, a desperate one. A band of 60 Fezzani, some of the keenest and most intelligent fighters among the Arabs, had cleverly passed round the left of the Italians and practically cut off the hill from the north. Another force of Arabs lay round the hill on the south. There was indeed, by midnight, only one possible outlet for the beleaguered Italians—a small open space on the west of the hill which the Arabs had failed to close up. The existence of this "way out" was revealed to the enemy by a curious incident. A young subaltern of the Bersaglieri had been into

Tripoli for some purchases, and for some reason had not returned to Ain Zara when his battalion marched out in the early morning. Full of chagrin at his ill-fortune, he very pluckily started out alone across the desert to find his comrades. Guided by the sound of firing, the young officer at length discovered the whereabouts of the brigade. It was already dark, and, by a piece of extraordinary good luck, the wanderer rode straight for the one point from which access to the column yet remained open on the west. His arrival was indeed welcome, for up to that moment it appears that Colonel Fara and his officers were under the impression that they were completely ringed in by the Arabs, and, as they imagined, a large number of regular infantry. The courageous and resourceful subaltern volunteered to ride back to Ain Zara for reinforcements. He started off, but after he had ridden for 600 yards an Arab bullet brought his horse to the ground. He managed to run back to his friends, and, securing another mount, succeeded this time in making his way through the unguarded strip of desert. When half-way to Ain Zara his horse, blundering over the rough ground in the thick darkness, at length fell and broke

its leg. The Italian continued his journey on foot, and soon afterwards came across a patrol of Bersaglieri, from whom he secured a fresh horse, which brought him, with his alarming report, safe to the General at Ain Zara. Whatever decoration in the Italian Army may be equivalent to our V.C. is certainly due to this gallant young soldier. Meanwhile things on the hill had gone from bad to worse. Encumbered with their dead and wounded, incessantly attacked by the stealthy Arabs in front and rear, unable to employ their beloved artillery to any effective purpose, ignorant of their whereabouts, the wretched Italians were overtaken by despair, and the great reconnaissance which had left Tripoli at daybreak to punish the Arabs ended in a complete *débâcle*. Colonel Fara had selected for his stand an admirable position, well entrenched and otherwise provided with good cover, and the field of fire for his Maxims was excellent. But his troops had had more than enough, and the gallant Colonel, despite his expressed intention to remain where he was until daylight, was forced to yield to circumstances. His men had begun to waver and turn their faces towards Ain Zara. Orders were given which only recognized a *fait accompli*, and in a

retreat which became a rout the survivors of the force fled over the dark desert towards the north. The shattered remnants of Colonel Fara's brigade were met at daybreak by reinforcements dispatched from Ain Zara, and reached the camp six hours later.

It is extremely difficult to estimate the actual losses of the Italians in this disastrous engagement. I do not think that in any modern campaign there has ever been exhibited so barefaced a disregard for statistical accuracy as is found in Tripoli to-day. The Turkish authorities are compelled, in some instances, to rely more or less on native reports, and Arabs indulge habitually in exaggerations which take one's breath away. On December 16th there arrived at Azizieh an Arab who stated explicitly that he and a gendarme had been sent from Khoms with a dispatch announcing the capture of that town, and that the gendarme, whose horse had fallen lame, had refused to hand him the dispatch, but would arrive a little later in the day. Next morning the said gendarme did arrive, without any dispatch whatever. The whole story was, as Fethi Bey tersely put it, a "mensonge Arabe." Estimates, therefore, of Italian losses or Moslem successes, when based on Arab

reports, must always be taken with many grains of salt. However, in the present instance, the straggling fight and final rout took place within a short distance of where I was, and on inquiry next day of Turkish officers who had means of discovering the enemy's losses with some degree of accuracy, I learnt that the official figures estimated that several hundreds of the Italian infantry and gunners had been killed. All I can say for a fact is that two hundred Italian rifles were actually collected and brought in by the Arabs, with a quantity of ammunition. Heaps of boots, helmets, and hats stripped from the dead or found on the field of battle were exposed for sale in the market. Among the spoils was a large case of medical stores and appliances, valued at £150, and sold by an Arab for a few francs. The Turco-Arabic losses, vaguely described in the Italian reports as "very heavy," "much heavier than our own," and so on, were, as a matter of fact, 11 killed and 40 wounded. The latter were conveyed to the base hospital at Azizieh. The largest number of casualties occurred amongst the valiant Fezzani, who frequently fired at the Italians at 50 metres' range. Amongst the wounded was my former guide Mohammed, who had ac-

companied me from Médenine to Azizieh? This man, utterly useless as a servant and altogether objectionable, had redeemed his past and won some measure of my esteem by volunteering for service with the Arab levies. He made a useful fighter, for he had formerly served with the Spahis in Tunis, was an excellent horseman, and had plenty of pluck. I went to see him in hospital, and he told me a graphic story of how he got within a hundred metres of the Italians, and after he had taken a successful pot-shot at one of the enemy who was standing upright—probably an officer—he was himself brought to the ground by a bullet which pierced his thigh without touching the bone. Mohammed was, as usual, in high spirits, and informed me that he should soon be cured and would then at once return to Tunis. I certainly preferred him in his rôle of wounded soldier to that of the vainglorious and insolent guide, utterly spoilt by English and American tourists of both sexes. He appeared to be very little inconvenienced by the penetration of the slender Italian bullet, and his rather offensive gaiety was in signal contrast to the silent and dignified fortitude of a Turkish officer who lay on the next bed, shot clean through the lungs. Mohammed

had, despite his wound, contrived to carry away from the fight, as his share of the loot, an Italian rifle and a soldier's haversack, which contained about sixty cartridges in packages marked "Solenite, Capua."

Such then was the fight of December 19th. If the arrival of the five Arabs at Ain Zara was part of a carefully planned ruse, one can only say that no military trap ever caught a more gullible enemy. In any case the disaster taught the Italians a severe lesson, and gave them some insight into what an advance into the desert might mean for their forces. The one fact that prevented the utter annihilation of Colonel Fara's force was the failure of the Arabs' ammunition: they are terrible fellows to waste cartridges; every man fights "on his own" and knows little of fire control. The "lull" in the fighting about midnight of which the Italians speak was due simply to the fact that practically every cartridge had been fired away.

The Italians affected to make light of this shocking reverse, and the true facts of the serious losses were, as usual, carefully concealed. As to the number of the Turco-Arabic force I will merely say that the estimate of "500 to 1,000 Turkish regulars" found in the

report of even that careful and experienced correspondent, Mr. Bennet Burleigh, is a grotesque exaggeration. If one reads between the lines generally it is easy to see that a profound impression was made on the military authorities by the rout of Colonel Fara's force. This officer had doubtless done his utmost with the material at his disposal, and had at any rate extricated some portion of the column from a position of the utmost peril. But while he was rewarded by promotion, the General of Division at Ain Zara was relieved of his command.

Lucky indeed were the Italians who in the darkness of that dreadful night escaped the bullets and knives of the beleaguering Arabs and found themselves once more within the cover of their trenches and naval guns. No nation has ever failed more thoroughly than Italy to observe the Biblical injunction that those who think of engaging in warfare should first sit down and count the cost thereof!

There are two main caravan routes from the Tunisian frontier to the Turkish lines. The southern road, such as it is, crosses the frontier near Dehibat, and then via Nalut runs to Gharian, and so on to Azizieh. This is by far

the longer journey and occupies three more days than the coast route from Ben-Gardan, though it possesses the advantage of greater security from any possibility of Italian aggression. Further, although such considerations have little weight in war-time, the track is free from the appalling dullness and monotony which add to the tedium of the northern road, as it lies through the Jebel country, among hills and trees and running water. I have mentioned possibilities of danger from the Italians, but a very brief experience of the invaders has shown the Ottoman forces that they have very little to fear from the enemy along the coast track. Here is a road running for miles within a few hundred yards of the sea, over which the Italian warships steam without the slightest fear of interruption. Nevertheless, day by day caravans slowly make their way along the desert flats and troops march hither and thither, all within sight and easy range of the cruisers and destroyers which patrol the coast west of Tripoli. What a pitiable spectacle of inefficiency—not to use a harsher word! A first-class European navy, engaged in a conflict with an enemy of a numerical inferiority almost absurd, feebly allows a caravan route to con-

tinue open under its very eyes without any attempt, worthy of the name, to destroy so important a line of communication!

I do not forget the fact that the warships have fired hundreds of shells. From Azilat to Bou-Kamesch the coast is littered with shell splinters and shrapnel bullets. The able correspondent of the "Temps," who was in camp with us at Azizieh, was not exaggerating when he wrote from the western coast, "Nous assistons ici à une véritable orgie d'obus et de mitraille, à une continuelle fantasia navale à coups de canon."

Nobody along the shore cared twopence about these ridiculous bombardments, which rarely hit anything in particular and never hurt anybody. By making a detour after the frontier posts were passed it was possible to travel out of sight and range of the Italian warships, but nobody ever took the trouble to do this. The camel men laughed at the erratic shrapnel, and the Turkish officers rejoiced to see a few more thousand lire of the Italian taxpayers dissipated in noise and smoke.

Up to the middle of December this game of long bowls had continued. It was expensive, but quite safe. There was nothing to fear

from the Arabs even when, as at Azilat, they rushed into the sea up to their waists, in order to get nearer for a shot at the enemy. On December 15th a sudden access of valour inspired the Italians, and two warships arrived opposite the Marabout of Sidi Said, some 25 miles from the frontier. The tomb of this holy man, venerated throughout the whole of Tripoli, stands out in striking and beautiful relief from the dreary plain. The snow-white dome of the vast tomb rises above a sand-dune, and at its foot some little vegetation clusters round a spring of fresh water. The warships came to anchor, and a party of sailors were actually landed from a steam-launch. But an Arab woman standing near the Marabout had witnessed the arrival of the infidels, and, like a goose on the Capitol, screamed out her warning notes to some men working in the adjoining fields. These Arabs seized their Mausers and, with some friends in the vicinity, made up a small band, which instantly advanced to give battle to the landing party. The Italians, however, did not wait for further developments, but instantly clambered into their launch and steamed off to the ship, which thereupon fired many rounds of shrapnel at the sand-dunes and disappeared.

About 5 o'clock next morning two Italian cruisers arrived at the same spot and anchored close to the beach. The Arabs were alert and faithfully carried out the orders issued by Major Moussa Bey, the Zouara Commandant, viz., to carefully conceal themselves in the sand-dunes and allow the Italians to land and advance some distance before firing a shot. When I saw Arabs watching for Italians from their hiding-places in the sand, their eyes glistening and their whole being absorbed with the hope that the enemy would come ashore, I was always reminded of my favourite setter "Dick," who sometimes joins me, without permission, when I am waiting for flighting ducks in Norway. When a duck sails up and flops into the water far out in the lagoon, "Dick" shivers and bristles and gently whines in his intense excitement, and I have to hold him down by force. Moussa Bey had infused some measure of discipline into his Arabs, and there they lay in the dunes, their fingers itching to fire on the invaders. The first detachment was commanded by an officer and carried trenching tools. The launch made two other journeys, and the three boat-loads, some 150 men all told, advanced cautiously from the beach. The officer led the way, and continually stopped

to survey the plain and the distant hills with his field-glasses. Just as the landing party commenced to climb the dunes the Arabs opened fire. The officer, badly wounded, fell on his knees, and a second bullet killed him outright. The effect on the Italians was striking. The 150 men simply turned tail and bolted in utter confusion to the beach, hotly followed by 34 Arabs, who could no longer be restrained from pursuit. The sailors managed to carry off the body of their officer and six killed or wounded comrades, but they left on the sand 50 picks and shovels, 300 cartridges, and a number of sailors' caps. One Arab was wounded by a bullet which pierced his cheek and smashed his jawbone.

Such was the first and, up to the present, the last attempt to interrupt the Turkish lines of communication on the north. The moral effect produced on the Arabs was tremendous.

It has always been difficult to secure accurate information with reference to the continual fighting that has been going on at Khoms, Benghazi, Tobruk, and Derna. Enver Bey has almost from the commencement of the war been in command of the Ottoman forces at Benghazi, and he has succeeded in collecting a considerable body of Arabs. The Italians

have used no less than two divisions for the occupation of the coast towns of Cyrenaica, but despite this fact it is quite evident that their garrisons are besieged, and that the invaders have been unable to advance beyond the defences of the towns and the protection afforded by their naval guns. The Arabs have apparently suffered in their fierce attacks on the entrenched Italians, and in the most serious engagement which has occurred Enver Bey's casualty list reached a hundred. On the other hand, if one reads between the lines of the censored messages to Rome, it is easy to see that no progress is made in the occupation of Cyrenaica beyond the limits of the town-walls, and that the sum total of Italian losses is steadily increasing. I know, further, that the Ottoman authorities are greatly encouraged by the success and pertinacity of their forces in Cyrenaica, and one incident for which I can vouch, viz., the capture of 100 Italian prisoners and a field-gun, certainly indicates that the *dernier mot* does not rest entirely with the invaders at Benghazi. The earlier rumours about the Khoms fight on December 15th were vague and incoherent, but the official dispatch subsequently received at headquarters reported that on the day in question 2,000 Italians

landed at a point a little west of Khoms, and advanced in conjunction with a sortie of the besieged garrison. They were at once attacked by a much smaller force of Turks and Arabs, and driven back to the trenches with considerable loss.

The bombardments of Zouara have been referred to elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE TURKISH CAMP

JEBEL ZOWEIAH, a veritable Acropolis, rising from the surrounding plains, had long been visible before our eyes beheld the goal of our long and difficult journey, the Turkish camp at Azizieh, which lies at the foot of the hill. In a few minutes we found ourselves in the midst of a wonderfully busy scene. In a large open space squatted hundreds of Arabs, chattering like magpies and carrying on a brisk trade with officers and men. There seemed to be no lack of food for the Sultan's fighting-men in Tripoli. On every side were sacks and baskets full of onions, potatoes, chillies, dates, lemons, eggs, rice, mutton, or goats' flesh, salt, oranges, sugar, and native bread; there was even a fair number of rather lean fowls, but no trace of coffee. Firewood and tobacco and sugar were scarce and costly. I could see no signs what-

ever of famine prices. Potatoes could be bought about 3 lb. for 2d., eggs 8d. a dozen, meat about 4d. a lb.—even best neck of mutton! Native bread was dearer here than in the Tripolitan towns and villages, the little flat loaves selling at 20 centimes in lieu of the usual 10. As far, then, as the question of food is concerned, the war might last for years in the interior of Tripoli, while any considerable advance of the Italian Army would have to depend almost entirely on sea-borne food conveyed with incredible difficulty over the desert wastes and sand-dunes.

The "suk" or market was bounded on the south by the usual konak—a central courtyard filled with Arabs and camels and extremely filthy. On the upper story was a broad terrace loopholed for rifle-fire and commanding fine views of the desert and the Gharian range, and beyond the terrace were a number of poorly furnished rooms.

The Turkish officers experienced at Azizieh the very minimum of personal comfort. I never heard a word of complaint, and every one seemed in good temper and good spirits. Yet what a signal contrast exists between the conditions of active service in the British Army and those which prevailed at

Azizieh! Here in a small room in the tumble-down konak slept the Commander-in-Chief, Fethi Bey, and Djevad Bey. The writing of numerous dispatches, the issue of daily orders, the holding of courts-martial, the reception of Arab deputations, had all to take place in this small room, which also served as the "mess" for all the meals of the staff. If ever I saw discomfort in tabloid form, I saw it in that untidy apartment!

Colonel Nesciat Bey was always courteous to myself and to other foreigners in camp. He had from the first been faced with difficulties which few commanders would like to contemplate. He had extricated his men with real ability from the confusion of the bombardment period, and his tactics were sound. How much better, for example, to lure the Italians out to Bir Tobras and then beat them soundly than to leave his men for an indefinite period under the harassing fire of the warships. The Commander and his able colleague, Fethi Bey, had succeeded in thoroughly welding together the diverse elements of their composite force and instilling a measure of discipline into the Arab irregulars—no easy task. Practically every Turkish officer understood French, and Fethi Bey, fresh from his

service at the Embassy in Paris, talked it fluently; but when he played with his little dog he always spoke to it in Slav.

We were lucky in our correspondents. sides Bettelheim and Gasztowtt, whom I mentioned elsewhere, Messrs. Seppings-Wright and Ostler added a great deal to the pleasure of my camp-life, and I parted from them with real regret. Ostler had come fresh from interesting and exciting adventures in Morocco, and was always "good company" in the best sense of the term. Seppings-Wright's popularity among the Arabs was remarkable. Day after day a little circle of sheikhs, including one of the most distinguished Arab deputies, Sheikh Beroni, gathered in his bell-tent as a mark of their respect and admiration for the Englishman. His natural charm of character was accentuated in the eyes of the Arabs by his possession of a beard—hall-mark of the highest dignity and distinction. Seppings. Wright's servant, Selim, a half-breed Arab from Aden, interpreted by day and cooked admirably by night.

Other rooms were occupied by the Red Crescent doctors, Captain Bettelheim, myself, and various members of the staff. Fethi Bey was unfortunately absent on my arrival, but

Mr. Montagu, late of the 5th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, who was just leaving for Gharian, promised to convey my letter of introduction to this distinguished officer, whose splendid courage and ability have inspired the whole plan of the Turkish defence.

I had not previously had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Montagu, and greatly enjoyed a chat with him. A severe attack of dysentery had cut short his sojourn with the Arab irregulars, but the comparative brevity of his service at the front had been compensated for by its vivid and exciting character. Probably from lack of experience and an unwillingness to conceal the fact that he held a commission—he had been a second-lieutenant "on approbation" in one of the Special Reserve battalions of the 7th Royal Fusiliers—Mr. Montagu found very serious difficulty in making his way to Tripoli. He was detained for nine days at Sfax, but at length succeeded in reaching the Tripolitan coast after a plucky and adventurous voyage in a sailing-boat. On his arrival the Turkish officers had been very kind to him. As a soldier, he was naturally of little practical value, for he could neither give nor receive a single order or word of command; but Captain Emin Effendi, who

was in charge of some Arab levies at Suk-ed-Djema, very kindly took Mr. Montagu with him, and the young Englishman was fortunate enough to see a good deal of the desultory scrapping which went on incessantly in this part of the oasis in the earlier weeks of the campaign. He was dressed in an officer's uniform and sword, which he had somehow secured at Zouara, and showed great pluck in various attacks on the Italian outposts amongst the houses on the edge of the oasis. I was rather amused when, in reply to a joking remark on the wear and tear of his uniform, he informed me gravely that this might well be the case as he had worn it in "eleven battles"!

The hardships of active service and the bitter cold of the nights had proved too much for Mr. Montagu's youthful constitution, and he lay in hospital at Suk-ed-Djema for some weeks. Subsequently the Turkish medical staff, who took every possible care of their invalid, had him conveyed to Azizieh, where he was assigned a comfortable room with two soldier servants to look after him. When I arrived at Azizieh he was on the point of yet another removal to the healthy surroundings of Gharian in order to restore him to

final convalescence and recovery. I hope Mr. Montagu was adequately grateful to his Turkish companions, for at the cost, in one instance, of inflicting some discomfort on their own wounded officers, they lavished on the young Englishman attentions which I am certain he would not have received from any other nation in the world. The conveyance ready with its three horses to convey Mr. Montagu to Gharian was a transport wagon captured from the Italians and marked as follows: *XI Reggto. Bersaglieri. T.S. Carretta Alpina.* Verily the *incensæ arenæ* of the North African desert formed a strange environment for an Alpine "carretta"!

Mr. Montagu was naturally anxious about his future, and to my astonishment seemed to be unaware of the fact that by the King's regulations officers, including "Militia" officers like himself, or even Territorial officers, are forbidden, not merely to fight in a foreign war—a sufficiently obvious provision—but even to be present in a country where war exists or is even threatened. Since the commencement of the Italo-Turkish hostilities no British officer has even been allowed to travel to Malta or India through the Italian peninsula. I was already aware of the fact

that Mr. Montagu's commission had been cancelled, but as he was evidently very weak after his serious illness I thought it better to withhold the unpleasant news from him, and I contented myself with quoting instances in which distinguished soldiers who had technically transgressed the civil and military laws of their country by taking service under a foreign flag had, after a period of punishment, purged their guilt and been reinstated. Several telegrams had passed between the British and Turkish War Offices with respect to Mr. Montagu, and the authorities at Stamboul had offered in the event of his commission at home being forfeited to give him a commission in the Turkish Army. This young Englishman has rendered one real service to the Ottoman staff in Tripoli. Amongst the palms of the oasis he had seen with his own eyes concrete cases of the atrocities committed by the Italians in the October massacre. The testimony was accurate and trustworthy, and was corroborated by such fearless correspondents as Mr. McCullagh and the representative of the "Lokalanzeiger." About a week before Christmas Mr. Montagu returned from Gharian and left for England. He wished,

he informed me, to stir up public feeling in England about the Italian outrages, and seemed convinced of his power to do this. But, as I told him, this attempt had already been made, and with some partial success, by Mr. Stead, Mr. McCullagh, and others, and history makes itself so rapidly nowadays that the British public would have by this time quite forgotten the very occurrence of the deplorable events of last October. Whether Mr. Montagu will accept a commission in the Sultan's army or return to Tripoli I do not know, but at any rate he has time on his side, and I hope that he may some day obtain his heart's desire and become a great soldier.

Facing the big konak was a building utilized partly as a temporary base hospital, and close to it were pitched the green tents of the Red Crescent doctors, whose advent was a veritable godsend to the Ottoman forces. I frequently met the Turkish doctors, both civil and military, and found them most interesting companions. Go where you will in the world you will find no more interesting conversationalists than medical men. Because of a certain indefinite awe and interest inspired by their "dreadful trade," doctors always find listeners.

Much that I learnt from the medical staff in camp was full of significance. For example, take the case of the wounded Arabs, who in some instances absolutely refused chloroform for their operations. Men calmly submitted to the amputation of arms and legs without any anæsthetic—a thing almost incredible to Europeans, more susceptible to mental and physical tortures. A poor Arab woman who was operated upon for the removal of an Italian bullet from her side endured the pain of the deep incision and a prolonged operation without chloroform and without tears.

Then, again, take the fact of the enormous preponderance of wounds due to shrapnel bullets and shell splinters—a most unusual feature in modern warfare. This points to two things—firstly, the ineffective rifle-fire of the Italian infantry, who avoid even the small amount of necessary exposure required for taking aim in trenches; and, secondly, the immense number of the field and naval guns that the Italians bring into action.

The water supply at Ain Zara was, as the name implies, from springs, but since the removal of the staff and headquarters to Azizieh we had to rely on a couple of wells, one of which refilled itself every night after

the exhaustion of its contents by day. The water from these wells was extremely bad, and it is amazing that illness was not more rampant in the camp. There had been some cases of cholera before our arrival, but none recently. Yet on December 10th the body of a Turkish officer, Ifket Bey, was borne past my tent, followed by a group of officers and soldiers, to the little cemetery on the summit of the hill, and I learnt that the first case of enteric had occurred in camp and proved fatal. Although no subsequent recrudescence of this disease troubled the camp, the news for the moment was ominous. Typhoid is the bane of modern armies, and killed as many men in South Africa as the Boer bullets. The bacillus enters the system chiefly through the medium of food and drink, and common prudence coupled with a little self-control can practically enable one to defy the risk of infection. I therefore laid down the following stringent rules for our tiny *ménage*. One water-bottle was filled with a strong solution of permanganate of potash, and the other, after a thorough rinsing with this disinfectant, was filled with water which had been boiled for fifteen minutes and then cooled with the addition of three "soloids"

of sodium acid sulphate; this drug precipitates all the grosser impurities of the well water. It was almost impossible to guarantee the boiling of water in the South African camps. Even when opportunities offered we did not possess the marvellous equipment for the purpose found in the Japanese armies in Korea and Manchuria. The unpopularity of the "boiling water" regulation, and the amazing inability of some men to endure thirst for any considerable length of time, were obstacles in the way of combating the enteric scourge. I have seen men, after a hot march, break from the ranks, rush down a nullah and drink eagerly of muddy water in which lay the body of a dead camel! Even in the enforced leisure of the block-house lines in South Africa it required all one's vigilance to ensure that the men took the trouble to boil their water. Nevertheless, when everything in this direction is accomplished there remains that great enemy of the human race, the ubiquitous housefly, the actual embodiment of a "terror that flieth by night, and destroyeth at the noontide." In some places these insects swarmed, and I passed tents absolutely black with them.

At any rate, all reasonable precautions were

required in a camp like ours, which in parts formed what an irate colonel once denounced in my hearing as an "Ægean stable." Sanitary arrangements in the ordinary sense of the word were altogether non-existent. Arabs in squalid rags huddling together, men, women and children, and flies and bad water everywhere! Can one imagine a more tempting nidus for the germs of cholera, typhoid, or dysentery? Nevertheless, some kindly Providence watched over the brave protectors of Islam and their fatherland, and deaths from disease were few and far between. On December 11th the droll German appeared—merry, dishevelled, ineffective: and on inquiries being made he proved to be not a qualified doctor, but merely a medical student who had come to Tripoli with the intention of demanding 4,000 francs a month for his services—a hope that was doomed to disappointment, for the Turks, after a fortnight, told him he had better go home, and home he went in a very bad humour. Meanwhile an Arab ambulance corps had been called into existence by Ahmed ben Slama, a clever Tunisian Arab from Suk Belladj, near Sfax. The class of ten Arabs, clad in an odd assortment of torn and dirty garments, were drawn up in a line and were

duly "told off." They were then shown how to lift upon a stretcher one of their number who threw himself prone on the sand. The main difficulty was the refusal of the pupils to take their lessons seriously. Every one of them, including the hypothetical corpse, grinned broadly. A very different spirit is evinced by Sudanese blacks, who, instead of any tendency to regard drill *pour rire*, positively revel in it. In the Sudan the black troops took such delight in squad and musketry drill that even when their parades were over they used to gather together in little groups and drill each other "on their own."

During two days, December 10th and 11th, in addition to Captain Ifket Bey, six Arabs were buried on the hill-top 50 yards above my tent. Most of these deaths were due to wounds received in the last battle. The amount of battering these water-drinking Arabs and Turks will stand, before they succumb, is astonishing. One Arab *walked* 28 miles to Azizieh from the firing line with *seven* bullet wounds in him, and, after treatment, refusing to be sent to the big base hospital at Gharian, insisted on returning to the front!

These simple burials in the desert camp have none of the impressive accompaniments which

surround a military interment in our army, even when on active service. There is no formation among the little group who follow the body of their comrade, no firing over the grave, no bugle-notes of farewell. Nevertheless, there was a certain grandeur about the funeral of the dead officer. No Imaum was to be found in the camp, but an Arab recited the simple, rugged verses from the Koran used for the burial of the dead. He had died far away from home and family, in the service of the Padishah and the defence of Islam against the unjust assaults of the infidel; surely for such men as these were reserved the joys of Paradise: let the mourners who stood around the grave go and do likewise. This wonderful religion of the great Prophet, which guides millions of mankind in life and, in death, cheers them with the hope of immortality, is without missionary effort extending its borders year by year in Africa. Established for centuries in the northern provinces, it constantly finds fresh recruits in the eastern and western portions of the continent. Certainly if the evolutionary fact of the survival of the fittest afforded an adequate test of the efficiency of human creeds, the claims of Christianity would be sadly defective in vast portions of Africa and Asia.

The churches of Carthage and Alexandria, the great scenes of Christian life familiar from the works of Tertullian, Cyprian, Synesius, Augustine, and Cyril, the faith of the Vandal invaders and their conquerors, the armies of Belisarius—all these have vanished away.

The summit of Jebel Zoweiah is crowned by the large dome of a Marabout's tomb, and standing there we all felt ready for any enemy on the plain below or in the heavens above! The aeroplanes, which have rendered such signal service to the invaders, have rarely ventured as far as Azizieh. On December 21st, however, an aeroplane, looking like a big vulture in the distance, reached our camp. The aviator could easily be seen, and the white metal glistened in the sun. But the machine kept away from the centre of the camp, and maintained an altitude of 2,000 yards or so. Had it been nearer we should have tried our luck at this "rocketer" sailing high above our heads as quickly as a fine cock-bird over the English tree-tops in December. Talk of sport! Fancy the oncoming flyer, the throw forward of the Mauser, and the awful crash earthwards of the disabled machine. The Psalmist and the author of the Book of Job both speak of Jehovah's "pastime." His fishing for the giant leviathan

and His capture of the sea-monster with a hook: the shooting of aeroplanes might well rank as a sport of the gods! On one occasion the wings of an aeroplane were pierced by bullets, but no vital injuries have yet been inflicted by fortunate or well-directed missiles from below. I should have thought that amongst the number of our amateur or professional aviators one or two could have been found adventurous enough to bring their machines across the frontier and throw in their lot with the gallant army so heavily handicapped. Flights over the desert, the novelty of the environment, the warm gratitude of every Moslem in India and Egypt, the flavour of risk which lends a mysterious charm to so many of life's adventures and experiences, the *camaraderie* of the Turks—best of "good sportsmen"—not to mention an adequate payment for the work—surely these features might prove more attractive than fooling about Brooklands or Hendon!

There can be no doubt that aeroplanes have repeatedly done good service to the Italians by bringing information as to the local massing of the Arab assailants and the general disposition of the Turkish forces round Tripoli. War balloons have been occasionally used from

which to drop explosives, but up to the present this method of attack has proved singularly futile. On one occasion bombs were thrown down on a Turkish field-hospital at Suk-ed-Djema. The projectiles burst amongst the tents and the fragments flew in every direction, but, *grâce à Dieu*, as the old Turkish doctor said, nobody was injured. This outrage on the part of the balloonist seems quite inexcusable, for a big Red Crescent flag was flying over the field-hospital in question, clearly visible to the aeronauts. A mistake, therefore, would appea in this case to have been out of the question. I lay stress on this point because a great deal of preposterous nonsense is written from time to time about the intentional and wilful misuse or disregard of white flags and Red Cross flags. A regular item in the mean campaign of slander initiated by certain colonial and English journalists against the Boers in the South African War was the alleged disregard of the privileges of warfare conferred by the use of these two flags. I am not prepared to deny that occasionally shots may have been deliberately fired at an ambulance or a white flag used in order to gain time, or for some other purpose even worse. There are brutes in all armies. But there was never the

slightest ground for the wholesale and ungenerous charges levelled against the brave Boers, an enemy well worthy of our steel in every respect. What is a white flag or a Red Cross ensign in a modern engagement? One would imagine from some foolish diatribes that these things were as big as a house and as visible as a church steeple. Modern fights extend over a vast area, and a white flag (as these articles are not carried by soldiers in their kits!) is probably a more or less white handkerchief or the tail of a cotton shirt tied to the muzzle of a rifle. Under conditions of excitement, smoke, inequalities in the ground, and the long ranges within which modern rifle and shell fire is effective, how could any one be surprised if the improvised white flag is not seen? Take two instances in the South African War when this signal of surrender was made. In the chaotic fight of Nicholson's Nek the white flag was raised by a subaltern officer in the Gloucesters in the apparent belief that he and the handful of men in his immediate vicinity were isolated. As a matter of fact some 1,200 other troops lay around him, more or less concealed. What happened at Spion Kop, gallantly held for long hours under a searching and accurate fire from the Boer

forces? Some one in the makeshift trenches at length raised a white flag. The Boer fire ceased, and a party of the assailants emerged from their shelter and advanced to the British position. At that moment Colonel Thorneycroft leapt upon the parapet of the rough trench and shouted, "Go back, you d——d Boers! I will never surrender!" The Boers retired to their rocks, and as they did so fire was reopened upon them and some loss inflicted. At first sight this seems a disgraceful episode, and, of course, if any of our men deliberately fired on these retiring Boers after the surrender had been repudiated, their behaviour was inexcusable. But in this case it seems clear that the original bit of white rag had not been visible to any considerable number of the defending force. First impressions, again, caused by accusations of the wilful shelling of ambulance wagons should be influenced by the reflection that at 3,000 to 5,000 yards a flag, however big, appears even through the best Zeiss glasses a tiny speck, indistinguishable altogether in a bad light. I remember one of my colleagues in the House of Commons asking Mr. Harcourt at "Question Time" whether he could not replace the present flag on the Parliament buildings by one of ade-

quate size, and we were all astonished to hear of the enormous proportions of the existing flag, which appeared from the street below so insignificant.

The Red Crescent tents occupied a large area on the lower slope of the hill, close to the building used as a hospital, and in this vast camp, full of Arabs and animals, the civil doctors and their military colleagues doubtless found plenty to do.

As no one will suspect me of any lack of sympathy with the Turks, I will venture to pass a friendly criticism on the work of the medical staff at Azizieh. Greatly as I admire the self-sacrificing spirit of those civilian doctors—one of them to my knowledge had by leaving Constantinople on this voluntary service postponed indefinitely his impending marriage, while others had abandoned lucrative practices—I fear I cannot altogether congratulate the Red Crescent or military staff on their care of the camp. It has always been a puzzle to me that Turks, who are personally some of the cleanest people in the world, should tolerate collective dirtiness as much as they do. Of course we must not forget that a camp like ours at Azizieh was being continually entered by crowds of Arabs clad in dirty rags and accom-

panied by dirty animals. Nevertheless, there can be no valid excuse for the condition of the camp or for the failure on the part of the medical men to guarantee at any rate some observance of the elementary laws of cleanliness and sanitation. In a soil so easily excavated, adequate sanitary arrangements might easily have been constructed, but no attempts of the kind were apparent, and the result was that in many parts of the vast area covered by tents, men, and animals, the surface of the ground was indescribably filthy, and the atmosphere was full of horrible smells. In the actual vicinity of the medical tents the ground was littered with the feathers of plucked fowls and various kinds of offal, which naturally attracted swarms of germ-bearing bluebottles and common flies. A small area along the side of the hill might reasonably have been reserved for the Europeans, while the Arabs were assigned the vast plain to the south of the market. But, as it was, these brave but dirty warriors were apparently allowed to squat anywhere they pleased, and form with their malodorous camels most unpleasant little groups within a few yards of one's tent. As far as I could see, the regulars were not compelled to boil the water, fraught as it was with

terrible danger to health. In short, the camp presented an altogether favourable nidus for the bacilli of cholera, enteric, gastritis, trachoma, and other troubles, and some kindly Providence must have watched over the brave defenders of Tripoli and so saved them from the dire evils with which they were menaced through their own neglect and inefficiency.

Yes, if one is to judge by the general condition of the camp hygiene at Azizieh and elsewhere, the medical staff of the Ottoman forces has not kept pace with the military progress which has given the Sultan one of the most efficient armies in the world. A Turkish official who was discussing this subject with me acknowledged the general backwardness of the medical authorities, and he added, "Look at the hideous losses from enteric incurred by the armies of wealthy England in the South African War!" He was right. We "muddled through" our medical as well as our military work in that disastrous campaign, and the dreadful statistics of our losses from enteric form a chapter full of national humiliation and discredit. How well I remember the sight of enteric victims lying on the ground with nothing between them and the damp soil except a waterproof sheet. How many a life

full of happiness and promise was cut short, which would have been preserved had our medical staff possessed the skill and efficiency displayed in the Japanese War a few years afterwards. Our losses were heavy from this scourge—the vast majority of the 12,000 deaths from disease were due to typhoid —while only 8,000 perished from wounds received on the field of battle. The actual losses of the Japanese armies from enteric were under 1 per cent.! In fact, the Japanese have the credit of having at length beaten off the devastating assaults of the fever which had hitherto followed modern armies like some avenging angel. It was always the same cruel story. In all recent wars—the Franco-German, Russo-Turkish, Cuban, South African, Chinese, and the various minor campaigns carried on by France in Morocco, Madagascar, and Tongking—the ravages of enteric have proved almost as disastrous as those inflicted by bullets and shells. Hence no apology is needed on the part of any military annalist who lays stress on the importance of the medical staff in the successful prosecution of a campaign. The layman often feels irritated at the apparent slowness of medical progress. The issues involved are

so great, the lives of our friends so infinitely precious, that it is difficult to restrain our impatience when we survey the slow advance of bacteriological discovery. Although the anti-typhoid serum was made and tested no less than twenty-four years ago, and experiments on animals proved conclusively that the injection in increasing doses of the pure culture of enteric germs, sterilized by heat, rendered the animal immune to the disease itself, it was actually not until 1896 that the serum was used on a human being, a boy employed in the Berlin laboratory of Professors Pfeiffer and Kolle. Thanks to the energetic representations of Dr. Wright in England, feeble and tentative efforts were made in 1899 to "vaccinate" the British troops who were leaving for South Africa against enteric. On my own troopship nearly every officer submitted to the hypodermic injection of serum, but we had the greatest difficulty in persuading even a small fraction of the rank and file to undergo the treatment. From spasmodic work of this kind it was difficult to derive accurate statistics, but on the whole the results seemed quite satisfactory. Since this time astonishing effects have been produced by the compulsory use of the serum on a big scale. Anti-enteric

injection was obligatory on the Japanese soldiers, and, as said above, their deaths from this disease sank almost to vanishing-point. Amongst the Russian armies, where these drastic precautions were not enforced, the ravages of typhoid were heavy. As an indication of the extraordinary efficiency of the Japanese medical staff it is interesting to note that every soldier received a box of creosote pills—a useful prophylactic against intestinal disease-germs—and on the box was inscribed the quaint notice, "In order to beat the Russians, it is necessary to take three of these every day."

In still more recent times hypodermic injections against dysentery and enteric fever have been attended with astonishing results. The widespread use of the serum produced by the French bacteriologists, MM. Vaillard and Dopter, has actually caused a drop of 47 per cent. in France's death-roll from dysentery! The greatest French authority, Professor Chantemesse, gives some striking examples of the effects of the anti-typhoid serum. At Oudjda, for instance, where enteric fever was raging, the Professor "vaccinated" in August last fifty soldiers. Of these, not one contracted either typhoid or any form of gastric fever. Of thirty

Zouaves who had refused the injection and were quartered side by side with the fifty, one in five was attacked by gastric troubles and two men contracted typhoid. The American statistics are still more convincing. The medical staff of the United States Army stand no nonsense in the matter, and all soldiers are vaccinated on the right arm against small-pox and on the left against enteric. Look at the results. During two years and a half there have occurred amongst 45,000 troops only eleven cases of enteric, and not one of these cases has proved fatal! Surely it is time that all the armies of the civilized world safeguarded their young soldiers against the risks of the dreaded typhoid.

Another ever-present terror in camp arose from the incessant firing of their rifles by the Arabs. The waste of precious ammunition was bad enough, but the danger to life and limb caused by the reckless firing was even more serious. On December 15th I found on my return from Bengashir that two men had just been shot by the accidental discharge of a Mauser. An Arab had a bad wound in his thigh and a Turkish regular had been shot through the abdomen. The poor Turk's case was hopeless from the first—a bullet wound at

close quarters through the lower intestines—and he died the same evening. We were grieved at his death, for, apart from the sorrow caused to those who knew him, the loss of a single regular at this crisis was indeed irreparable.

There might have been some kind of dramatic justice had the Arab fallen a victim to the insane folly and carelessness of himself and his fellow-tribesmen, but, as it was, the Arab survived and the unfortunate young Turk died a needless and untimely death. Throughout the day the Arabs discharged their rifles into the air, but not always vertically. They handled their Mausers like children with new toys, and directly after cleaning the barrels fired off a cartridge (which of course helped to dirty the rifle again) in order to see if their precious gun was in good order. I have repeatedly heard bullets singing over my head, and it was really disconcerting to hear the sudden discharge of a rifle within a few feet of one's tent when one had already noticed the grossly careless manner in which the Arabs held their loaded weapons. I complained to the medical staff and other officers of this wild and dangerous waste of ball cartridge, but they only shrugged their

shoulders and said it was impossible to control or discipline these Arabs. Perhaps my narrow escape from the revolver bullet at Surman had made me unduly cautious, but I confess that after all the hardships of the journey and the successful defiance of various microbes, the prospect of possibly having one's career cut short by the bullet of some idiot "messing about" with his rifle was not a pleasant one. But yet the actual risk run in this big camp was scarcely greater than that which every sportsman incurs every season at home. It is, I suppose, an exception to find a game-shot in England of, say, forty years of age who has not had some part of his body lacerated by pellets more or less numerous. I have in my life taken a humble part in many forms of sport and in adventures uncovered by an insurance policy, but covert shooting with undergraduates is the most dangerous pastime I have yet discovered.

On December 12th I paid a visit to the Turkish lines round Tripoli. Tahir Bey had lent me an excellent artillery horse for the journey. I had also received every assistance from Captain Bettelheim, a peripatetic Tower of Babel, speaking fluent Turkish amongst his other linguistic accomplishments, an ideal war-

correspondent—cool, resourceful, and imbued with a genuine admiration for the Ottoman nation and its gallant army. After the delays which are inseparably associated with all non-European life, our little escort of two blue-coated Zaptiehs and two regulars appeared and we set out—Abdullah Bey, a smart artillery officer, Captain Bettelheim and myself. There was a regular track through the scrub from Azizieh, marked at intervals by little Arab villages and fertile gardens in the neighbourhood of wells. Our horses walked at the rate of some 4 miles an hour. Even on the harder portions of the desert soil their hoofs sank two or three inches at every step, and in the freshly blown sand of the dunes it was very heavy going. Galloping or even trotting—these horses do not seem to canter—is almost impossible over the desert paths, for the animal may stumble and fall at any moment. Moreover, the Turks spare their horses on these long hot journeys as much as possible, and we proceeded at a walking pace almost all the way. At intervals we came across groups of Arabs, and at one point seven Turkish soldiers had halted for a rest. When Abdullah Bey asked them where their boots were, they replied that they

had removed them in order to walk more easily in the sand. The Turkish captain was, like all his comrades, a delightful companion. He had been attached by his Government to the French Army for the recent manœuvres and was a warm admirer of Paris, its life and people. Abdullah Bey had never visited London and was deeply interested in all the details of our military system—recruiting, pay, periods of service, and so on. He was under the impression that every officer in the Brigade of Guards was of noble birth, but I explained to him that, with rare exceptions, in England money was an even more effective passport to power and privilege than good birth. It was the fashion in the days of the Russo-Turkish War to decry the Turkish officers, while praise was justly accorded to the gallant soldiers of Suleiman, Moukhtar, and Osman. But if general charges of inefficiency and worse were justified in 1878, it is perfectly clear that the Turkish officers of to-day, the men who have passed through the Harbié College and have seen service in Thessaly, Crete, Macedonia, and that scene of incessant conflict, the Yemen, are efficient soldiers, keen about their profession and thoroughly in sympathy with their men. As to their

social qualities, go where you will over the wide world and you will find nobody so kind, courteous, and considerate, nobody who better deserves the name of "gentleman" than the Turkish officer. My sense of obligation to these good friends and comrades is indeed a deep one, and I most sincerely hope that I shall, amid a happier and more comfortable environment, have the opportunity of meeting some of them again.

As we three rode side by side over the 16 miles of desert which separated us from the lines, we formed little plans of a pleasant meeting in London when the war was over. "May the *bon Dieu* further our schemes," said the Uzbashi, "and bring us together when the fighting is over, but for the moment in Tripoli *la mort est plus prochaine que la vie!*" Four hours in the saddle brought us within easy sight of a pretty oasis dotted with bell-tents—the main position on the left of the Turkish lines—and called by the charmingly vague name of Senit Beni-Adam—"Garden of Sons of Men." Our arrival evidently caused a good deal of pleasant excitement amongst a large crowd of Arabs in the camp. Inspired by the sight of Captain Bettelheim's camera, they ranged themselves in

two big semicircles, the chiefs in the middle firmly mounted on their prancing chargers, and standard-bearers with large red flags moving to and fro along the lines.

The spectacle was really magnificent in its display of elemental vigour and passion. Suddenly in loud and resonant tones an Arab would chant the refrain, "We are warriors, we fear not death for our fatherland," and then the massed ranks raised their rifles and swords and shouted with one accord, "We are true sons of our father," *i.e.*, in colloquial English, "chips of the old block." The enthusiasm was tremendous. Bettelheim took several photographs of this unique spectacle, but one felt that the occasion was really worthy of a great artist's brush. Holman Hunt would have done justice to the wonderful grouping, the varied colours—reds, whites, and browns—the yellow desert all around, and the sun blazing until the air quivered in the heat.

The senior officer at Beni-Adam was Major Nasmi Bey, of the 38th Cavalry Regiment. He was a tall, handsome man, with a great sense of humour and that simple charm of manner characteristic of the Ottoman gentleman. He had spent some twenty-five years

of his military service at Erzeroum, as for some reason he had incurred the disfavour of the tyrannical Abdul Hamid. Many as were the physical discomforts inseparable from this chaotic campaign, in one respect, at any rate, the senior officers were better provided than our own would be during a campaign, *i.e.*, in the size of their tents. Nasmi Bey had a bell-tent twice as big as the ordinary British pattern, and the sandy floor was covered by several fine rugs. Bettelheim and I had brought with us some tins—a lunch tongue, *paté-de-foie gras*, and sardines—fully expecting that we should have to fall back on these "reserves" for a meal. But what a surprise was in store for us! The paymaster of the cavalry, a stout and amiable officer in glasses, was, it seems, a most proficient *chef*, and the dinner he turned out in our honour at very short notice was as follows:—

1st Course: A ragout of mutton with an admirable potato salad.
2nd Course: Roast chicken.
3rd Course: A delicious *pilaff*.
Dessert: Two vast pomegranates.
Turkish coffee as good as you could get in a first-class restaurant.

Several of the officers, including the Commandant, spoke French, and Bettelheim was kind enough to translate a good deal of the Turkish conversation to me. The evening passed most pleasantly, and when I finally curled myself up in a Jaeger sleeping-bag for the night, and drowsily watched the wan radiance of the Bou-Meliana searchlights play round the tent, I looked forward to an unbroken sleep of six hours. At midnight, however, we were all awakened by the boisterous entry of Artif Bey in his bright red jersey and civilian trousers. He was accompanied by another officer and was in excellent spirits. He had, with four men, carried out a useful reconnaissance round Ain Zara and along the greater part of the Italian lines. As a cavalry officer he was very scornful about Italian methods: he found their cavalry lying on the ground asleep without a single patrol or vedette! The trenches round Bou-Meliana were strongly protected by row after row of barbed wire and two searchlights. Towards the summit of the rising ground at Ain Zara were posted batteries of artillery—everywhere along the lines were masses of guns, men, and horses. Large numbers of planks had been placed on the sand near Ain Zara to make the

tråction of the guns possible. Nevertheless the young officer showed no signs of despondency at the terrific odds to be faced—on the contrary, he and his comrades were full of optimism. The prevailing idea amongst them seemed to be that it was an error of judgment to evacuate the city at the commencement of the campaign. Of course, it is easy to be wise after the event, and one must remember that the large Arab contingents which have since arrived from the interior were not available at the moment when the ultimatum expired. Nevertheless, there were at the start at least 3,000 Arab fighting men in the oasis and town, and had these and the Ottoman regulars been sheltered by adequate trenches, it is doubtful if any mere bombardment would have driven them out. In that case the Italians would have found it extremely difficult to land.

Somewhere about 3 o'clock we got off to sleep again, and at eight, after some delicious tea, we set out once more with our escort. Captain Abdullah Bey had by this time shaved off his three weeks' beard, and looked very smart in one of the few complete uniforms which I saw throughout the campaign. He had smuggled his kit, Sam Brown belt and all,

across the frontier. A dark, handsome Turk, Captain Mahomet Bey, rode with us. He wore a bluish-grey cape taken from an Italian officer and carried a Mauser slung across his shoulders; one of his brothers, he told me, was an officer in the British Army. For two hours we rode over vast plains covered with the graceful asphodel, amid which the angry shade of Achilles stalked—*μακρὰν βιβᾶσα κατ' ἀσφόδελον λειμῶνα*—and to accentuate the old-time atmosphere, clumps of the arum which the Greeks call Amaryllis formed patches of vivid green against the browns and yellows of the soil.

The extreme right of this central portion of the Turkish lines was found at Fonduk Bengashir, some 8 miles from Senit Beni-Adam. Here were some Nizam and a number of Arabs. The building which gives its name to this place offered us shelter from the midday sun, and over some coffee I had an interesting conversation with a military surgeon. He laid great stress on the necessity of boiling all water used for drinking purposes, and told me that catarrhal conjunctivitis was prevalent amongst the Turks and Arabs. He was anxious to know what antiseptic lotion I used as a prophylactic against trachoma and other

eye troubles, and I told him it was a solution of corrosive sublimate (1–3,000). His dispenser sat beside him, an elderly Greek, who asked me in his own language how long I thought the war would last; the poor man was evidently bored with the whole business, and longed to get back to his wife and family in Tripoli. Here, as everywhere else along the lines, were displayed various articles captured from the enemy. After a fight all kinds of things are sold for a mere song. We saw a pair of Zeiss glasses, made at Jena, which their present owner bought for 5 piastres. I read, later on, a ridiculously untrue statement made "officially" by the Italians that "Up to the present no Italian ammunition has been captured by the enemy"! Here and elsewhere in the open market one could buy, more especially after an Italian "victory," Italian cartridges at the rate of eighty for 7d., and plenty of rifles and carbines for ridiculous sums like 3 francs! After the fight of December 19th Italian ammunition could be had almost for the asking. Soldiers' wooden water-bottles with Italian names scratched along the bottom were hung on the tent-poles, and the brown shelter tent made of two canvas sheets under which I lay was marked by the legend

"Onaghi Stefana—questa mia"—a pathetic reminder of the uncertainty attached to all mundane possessions!

Turkish uniforms in a campaign are always quaint. I well remember the equipment of the Sultan's troops during the Cretan insurrection of 1898. Some form of tarbush was, it is true, universal, but the rest of the men's clothing was very fragmentary: one had a pair of uniform trousers and an old civilian frock-coat, and so on. But the absurdity of their costume was quite forgotten when these gallant fellows paraded as the sun went down and cheered the Padishah who neglected them. Unkempt, however, as was the appearance of the Cretan troops, I think their comrades in the Tripolitan War presented an even stranger spectacle. Most of the soldiers wore bedraggled suits of khaki serge or drill, and many of them had bluish-grey greatcoats, but their garments were torn in every direction, buttons and shoulder-straps were missing, and nothing remained of some of their boots except the soles. Nevertheless, one could travel all over the wide world and find no better soldiers than these ragged regiments—"Si patients, si braves, mais, monsieur, il n'y a pas de l'argent," as an old captain once remarked to me in the evil days of the old regime.

"The more I see of Ottoman troops in various parts of the world, the more I realize their value, and I am convinced that under their new and improved conditions they have few equals. The French are admirable fighters, but they are sometimes too elated by success and unduly depressed by failure. The Turk is a happy mean between these two extremes. He is never boastful, but during the present campaign against immensely superior forces, the Turkish regulars, officers and men alike, have displayed acts of almost incredible coolness and courage. On the other hand he endures reverses, small or great, with admirable fortitude. When the menace of General Pecori's division, 15,000 strong, on their flank necessitated the retirement of the small force at Ain Zara, the regulars marched away in most leisurely fashion without any sign of apprehension as to a possible attack by the enemy's cavalry; but perhaps they had got to know the Italians by this time and to estimate them at their true fighting value. One of the best features about a Turkish army is the excellent feeling which subsists between all ranks. The discipline is admirable, and I have never detected any trace of undue familiarity, but officers and men are bound together by ties of real affection and

mutual respect. The able contributor to "Blackwood" under the pseudonym of "Kepi" puts the case admirably when he says that what the Turks desire is that Italy should land an army in Asia Minor or Macedonia, because, if she did this, so surely would she pay a war indemnity to Turkey!

The officers' costumes were almost as strange as the men's. Some of them who had entered Tunis by devious and difficult paths since the declaration of war were dressed in ordinary civilian clothes. One of those at Bengashir, *e.g.*, wore a suit of brown corduroy. A delightful officer who travelled with us for some part of the way wore putties and black elastic-sided boots with spurs, and the Commandant carried in his hand a lady's reticule. Nobody seemed to care a straw how he was clothed, a very pleasant feature of non-European life generally. Further, what else could be expected under the circumstances? Although a formal announcement of the ultimatum and its twenty-four hours' time limit had been made to the Turkish authorities at Tripoli by the Italian Consul, no steps could be taken without orders from Constantinople, and these did not reach the town until some six hours before the warships opened fire on the forts! Fancy

the hurry and confusion of those six hours! Horses had to be secured for the field-guns, camels and mules for transport, commissariat arrangements to be hastily settled, tents and ammunition to be loaded—in short, all the thousand and one small things inseparable from the mobilization and retirement of even a small force had to be thought out and secured within 360 minutes! It reflects infinite credit on the skill and energy of Nesciat Bey and his staff that the entire force under his command was, with the exception of a handful of gunners left "to make a show" by serving the futile artillery in Forts Hamidieh and Sultanieh, successfully extricated from the dire confusion which prevailed in the menaced town. There was little time on that fateful evening for farewell meetings of relations and friends. A military surgeon, who had married a Catholic lady, told me he rushed round to his house amid the turmoil only to find it quite empty, and that since the evacuation he had not the remotest idea what had become of his wife and six children. The entire force moved slowly out to bivouac in the neighbourhood of Gargaresch, and in a few days was spread over the Ain Zara lines.

During our sojourn in the Turkish lines the searchlights from the sea, some 12 miles away, were clearly visible, sweeping majestically over the palm-trees and sand-dunes. Towards the east the sound of heavy gun-fire reached our ears from the warships off Tadjoura. This little town was absolutely empty of its inhabitants, but the sailors continued to waste their costly shells against the mud-bricks.

From Bengashir we returned to Azizieh. We had of course visited merely the central portions of the extensive Turkish lines, some 7 miles in length; but detachments of Ottoman troops, Turks and Arabs, occupied the whole distance to the right and left in a vast semicircle round the Italian position, while the outposts formed an inner ring some 6 miles farther on towards the sea. But what an amazing difference in the theory and practice of the two forces thus brought face to face! Here was the invading army—with uninterrupted communications and immense stores of ammunition and an overwhelming force of artillery, numbering 70,000 men in Tripoli alone, and backed by the guns and searchlights of a powerful fleet—these *ex hypothesi* assailants lay behind their deep trenches and wire entanglements, unable or

unwilling to advance. Some miles in front lay the defenders, a numerically inferior force, inspired with such utter contempt for the Italian legions that they made not the slightest attempt to entrench themselves, but waited for the opportunity which sooner or later Allah would send them. Never in all my campaigning experience have I met anything like this magnificent *morale* on the side of the little battalions. Their confidence seemed fully justified. The Turkish officers had nothing of the braggart or swashbuckler about them: they never put forward foolish and ill-founded claims on behalf of their comrades. Further, they one and all acknowledged most readily the personal bravery of the Italian officers, who exposed themselves with reckless courage in front of their men. If any corroboration of the Turkish testimony were needed one need only glance over the death-roll and casualty lists to realize the altogether disproportionate losses amongst the Italian officers when compared to the rank and file.

Again and again I have listened to the simple and graphic accounts of Turkish N.C.O.'s and officers who have found themselves at close quarters with the Italians. "There were 15 of us," said a sergeant-

major of Redifs, "and a whole battalion of Italians were advancing in the distance against us. We fired off all our cartridges, but 30 metres in front of us lay a box of ammunition still unopened. One of the men jumped up and rushed off to secure the box, but had not got half way before he was shot through the lungs and fell; he rose to his feet again, and on seeing this I gave the order to fix bayonets and charge. So with a shout we all sprang forward, and, *voilà!* the Italians retreated immediately amongst the trees and trenches. The wounded man did not die, but recovered and is at Azizieh now." All the Turks agree in declaring that the Italian officers have to drive their men forward by sabre-blows and revolver-shots. "About a fortnight ago," said Captain Mahomet Bey, "we noticed a force of Italians advancing in our direction. My men called out, 'Captain, the Italians will probably come a little nearer, because their officer has a revolver in his hand!'" Abdullah Bey, an officer in the Turkish artillery, told me that he had seen a line of Italian infantry in front of his own firing force—a few Nizam and a handful of Arabs: "Two officers were in front of the line, each of them with a sabre

in his right hand and a revolver in his left. They freely threatened their men, but with small results. Presently one of my Arabs fired at the officer on the left and he fell, whereupon the whole line turned tail and decamped." The Arab levies exhibit an even greater contempt for the King of Italy's troops. They have sometimes risen up from the sand-dunes and spat towards the trenches in front, in supreme disdain of opponents who dare not, in all their vast numbers, come out and fight in the open. One must of course make allowances for exaggeration in the stories of men bitterly incensed against the invaders of their country. But, as I say, boastful self-assertion is not in the least a characteristic of the Turk, and the impartial critic must admit that the course of the campaign up to the present has reflected very little credit on the Italian Army from the point of view of either military valour or capacity. In fact, the fighting qualities of the ancient Romans have never distinguished their successors in modern history. The armies of the peninsula have been worsted in almost every campaign they have undertaken—by the French, Austrians, and Abyssinians—and now stand a very fair chance of ultimate rout by the ever increasing

levies of fanatical Arabs. And when the true and detailed history of this strange campaign is written, the contrast between the military qualities of the opposing forces will be revealed in a manner which will simply amaze the world.

How vast appear the distances between place and place in the midst of these desert solitudes! After many handshakes our party of four set out from Fonduk for Azizieh. The Turkish officers had miscalculated the distance, which turned out to be quite 15 miles. Two hours passed and still the Acropolis of Jebel Zoweiah failed to appear. The sun went down behind the mountains in a splendour of gold and red, and the chill of the evening was so perceptible that I gladly accepted Bettelheim's kind offer of his second overcoat. The Zaptieh in front of us led us on without any hesitation, though how he recognized the faintly marked track I do not know. About 6.30 that well-known signal of human society, the barking of many dogs, reached our ears faintly, and then the welcome gleam of the camp-fires showed us that food and sleep were well within reach.

The borders of our camp were continually enlarged during December. Contingents of

Arabs arrived almost daily. A war-drum would be heard in the distance and gradually a column would appear over the gentle undulations of the desert. The Arabs, "chattering like cranes," advanced in ragged fours, the result of the elementary drill provided by perhaps a couple of silent Turkish regulars marching with them. At the head of the column rode the sheikhs, splendidly mounted, and Crescent flags embroidered with Koran texts waved in the air. Amid loud shouts of welcome and the trilling notes of feminine joy the new arrivals would march round the camp, and then, taking up a bivouac ground, settle down in coloured masses "like garden beds," according to the picturesque wording of the gospel narrative. Splendid reinforcements came from Tibou and distant Fezzan, as well as from nearer regions in the east, south, and west. The Fezzani had actually taken forty-six days to cover their tremendous march across the desert, and a large contingent from the fierce Tuaregs of the Sahara was daily expected. One evening a caravan of five hundred camels arrived laden with dates, a present sent in advance by tribesmen in the far interior.

An officer who came to my tent on Decem-

ber 10th told me that the Arabs were on their own initiative sending an appeal to England, in which they stated their unalterable decision never to yield to Italy or permit Italians to occupy their country: but they would welcome an English control similar to that which exists in Egypt. I advised them to lay stress in such an appeal on the fact that England ruled over many millions of faithful Mohammedan subjects and never exercised the slightest interference with the religious convictions and practices of the various races within the Empire. One visitor declared that the Arabs had already included both these points in their appeal. I felt proud that these poor people in the deserts of Tripoli knew of the useful work accomplished in Egypt and the religious toleration of our Imperial Government.

I had pitched my little green tent in the open; B—— slept in it by night, and I wrote in it by day. It was a very slight structure, and if we had not pegged it down at the corners would have been blown clean away from its moorings. Nevertheless, we led a happy and contented life in and about it. Small children and old beggar-women came to see us, and lean and hungry dogs with plaintive

eyes were always fed by the Turks and ourselves, though the Arabs usually drove them away with stones. Was our Lord referring to these suppliant dogs, ubiquitous in Asia Minor, when He asked the question, "If they ask for bread, will he give them a stone?" The father will not treat his children as men treat dogs: cast stones at them when they beg for a morsel of bread. I do not know if this exegesis is original or of any value; I give it for what it is worth.

From the 15th of December it was quite evident that a forward movement of some kind would be shortly carried out by the Turks. The 3,000 Arabs who had collected at Azizieh began to disappear in an odd, furtive way. They must have set out for the front at sunrise, for in the evening the desert would be as usual ablaze with camp-fires, while men and camels huddled round the warmth, and next morning their place would know them no more—the whole band of Arabs and animals had silently melted away. The trade of the market grew slack as the customers disappeared, and the sellers began to pack up and follow after the tracks of the buyers. The Arab is one of the most mobile of fighting men. He slings his rifle over his shoulder,

carries his cartridges in a fold of his jibbah, can live contentedly on barley bread, a few dates, and a little water, and, finally, can carry out marches of almost incredible length without apparent fatigue.

About 10 a.m. on the 17th an urgent dispatch reached Azizieh that an Italian advance had commenced on the right of their position, and that a large force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery was marching south-west from Tripoli. The staff left immediately, and the Red Crescent party, with the exception of Lutfi Bey, moved off to the front. I was not present when the important tidings arrived, but Bettelheim and Ostler at once mounted the horses they were lucky enough to possess and rode away towards Senit Beni-Adam. The distant booming of field artillery had already reached my ears, and after B—— and I had secured a camel for our baggage, we left for Beni-Adam on foot. I had previously ridden over the track, but walking was a very different experience, as a third of our path lay over undulating sand-dunes. The 16 miles took us a trifle over four hours, and we reached the welcome oasis just as the daylight was failing. What a change had come over the place since my previous

visit! The little area then covered by the tents of a few infantry and two squadrons of the 38th Cavalry had extended its borders in every direction in order to accommodate over 3,000 Arabs. Two of these warriors met B—— and myself just outside the camp, and were anxious to learn who we were and whence we came, but directly they heard that we were English they gave us a cordial permission to pass. A little farther on Fethi Bey met us, and was astonished to hear that we had walked from Azizieh. He assigned us a place for our little tent, which with the kindly help of some Turkish soldiers was soon in position. We had just settled down to a lunch tongue, oranges, and copious draughts of coffee, when two soldiers came with an invitation from Nasmi Bey to dine with him. I went over to explain to this charming officer that our meal was already arranged, but a little later he sent us a dish of chicken and rice and a fresh loaf of bread. We were tired after our hard walk and were glad to get to bed, but sleep was rendered difficult by the ceaseless noise of the camp. It is sometimes difficult to realize when Arabs sleep. All night long groups large or small sit round a fire listening to stories—they are great raconteurs—or else

joining in a monotonous chorus after recitations of Koran texts by one of their number. This antiphonal chanting has a great beauty of its own in the comparative stillness of the night—the simple and monotonous music which forms the basis of the Church's ancient plain-song.

All next day was occupied by the important engagement called by the Italians the Battle of Bir Tobras, which is described elsewhere. After the fight B——and I returned to Azizieh once more on two cavalry horses lent us by Nasmi Bey. We covered the 20 miles in two and a half hours, and as the baggage camel did not turn up till next morning about nine, when the man explained that he was "afraid to come home in the dark," I spent a most miserable evening. Food we had in abund ance, but the night was bitterly cold, and in spite of the kind loan of Ostler's greatcoat I was so chilled that sleep was impossible. However, the sun shone out, and our spirits were restored by some hot coffee and the sight of our missing camel, with the baggage intact. Amongst our goods and chattels hung an odd-looking rabbit which I had bought for a franc at Senit Beni-Adam. B—— had killed the rabbit in the usual English way by a blow

on the back of the head which broke its neck. But we were at once surrounded by quite a little crowd of Arabs and Turks, who were intensely interested in our method of slaughtering rabbits. Later on we determined to stew the creature with carrots and onions. But all B——'s entreaties were in vain when he tried to get an Arab to skin the rabbit. Nobody would touch it. I had some difficulty in explaining to the irate B——, who deftly removed the skin himself, the cause of the refusal on the part of the Moslems. The rabbit's blood was still in it, and no Arab or Turk or Jew would dream of touching so unclean an object. The strange antipathy to unbled meat is a special feature in ancient religions and primitive folk-lore. An early prohibition in the Book of Genesis forbids the eating of "the blood, which is the life thereof." Some commentators have rather fancifully explained this text by reference to the horrible habit of cutting off slices of flesh from living animals. This practice was stated by Bruce to be in vogue amongst the Abyssinians, and though his story was discredited at the time, its truth was subsequently established. But there is a deeper principle involved in this primitive rule of Genesis—the rooted idea that blood constitutes life. Exactly

the same thought occurs more than once in the Psalms, *e.g.* "What profit is there in my blood when I go down into the pit?" The *locus classicus* for this primitive belief is the wonderful eleventh Book of the Odyssey. Here Odysseus, duly warned, draws near to the realms of Hades: and the shades of the mighty dead approach him, the "strengthless heads"—strengthless because they have no blood. Then he fills a trench with the black blood of a slaughtered lamb and the ghosts come flocking to the welcome draught. Pale fear gets hold of Odysseus, but still he keeps off the shadowy forms with his bright sword and allows some of them to drink from the trench that so they may have strength and power to speak with him. And here in our desert kitchen was the same thought at work. The rabbit's blood had not been shed, its life remained in the dead body: it was a thing accurst, a monstrosity and utterly "taboo."

At first my tent on the hill-side was so isolated that a sentry was posted within ten yards as a special protection against possible risks from thievish Arabs. Nor perhaps was it merely of petty thefts that the military authorities were thinking. Throughout my sojourn in the interior of Tripoli, I always

found the Turkish staff officers exceedingly nervous about the possibilities of stupid mistakes on the part of the more fanatical and ignorant of the Arabs. I had not been long at Zouara, *e.g.*, when one good friend, Captain Hassan Effendi, brought in three infantry tarbushes and begged us very earnestly to wear them without fail if we walked into the town. Anything in the nature of a hat or helmet was regarded as peculiarly Italian, and the German doctor in his "wideawake" was on two occasions threatened by armed Arabs whom he met on his ride from Shousha to Zouara. As the Italian troops are equipped with white sun-helmets, the use of this headdress was peculiarly dangerous to any European unaccompanied by Turks or Arabs, and, indeed, never really free from risks. So henceforth I wore, and was proud to wear, a portion of the Sultan's uniform. On ordinary days the cushion of air guards the head admirably, and, when the sun is exceptionally hot, a dry towel, or even better a moist one, if worn over the tarbush, will form as effective a protection against sunstroke as one could possibly find.

A great deal of nonsense has been written on the Italian side about defections amongst the Arabs and animosities between them and

the Turks. One of the worst offenders in this respect has been the Tripoli correspondent of the "New York Herald," who, in his morbid anxiety to please the Italians, seems like the Prophet Habakkuk "capable de tout." The Italians soon learnt to their cost what the value of Arab "allegiance" amounted to, and discovered that they could not measure the mind and purpose of the average native by the standard of the traitor Hassouna Pasha. Disaffection forsooth! Never were the Tripolitan Arabs in better humour or better pleased with their Turkish neighbours. Those engaged in the firing line are paid regularly at the rate of 40 centimes a day, or, if mounted, 80; they have enough to eat, and, above all, they have a good rifle and plenty of ammunition. Not only do they love fighting for fighting's sake, but for the loot that frequently follows an encounter with the Italians. So ravenous indeed are the Arabs for loot that when the Turkish force at Ain Zara withdrew to Azizieh, Arabs remained for several hours later busily engaged in picking up odds and ends of camp furniture which might have been accidentally left behind by their comrades. If they perish they are assured of the joys of Paradise. An Arab

wants but little here below, but that little has been given to him by the Turks in full measure, overflowing. Before the war he fed on barley bread from January to December; now he revels in daily rations of nice "fârina," or white wheaten flour. In former times he was lucky to let out his camel for 3 francs a day, nowadays the Government will pay from 6 to 8 francs. This great step of arming the Arabs with modern rifles was one of tremendous moment, a piece of happy audacity on the part of the Ottoman authorities. One may rest assured that, whatever be the ultimate issue of the war, no power on earth will ever get these Mausers and Martinis back again from their present owners. Arabs love guns of any kind: they often feasted their eyes on my automatic revolver, and the magazine mechanism of a modern rifle fills them with delight. The poor *chameliers* who trudge for endless miles over the desert invariably carry over their shoulders an antiquated gun. The possession of firearms is the visible token of manhood and dignity. I well remember how the late Theodore Bent and I, when we explored the island of Socotra, bought six old Snyder carbines at Aden for a mere song. We had them nicely cleaned with Monkey

Brand soap, and on our arrival presented them to the Sultan. The royal recipient was enormously proud of these weapons, and the members of his standing army, some thirty in number, took it in turns to carry the carbines like walking-sticks, with their muzzles resting on the ground. One of the Arabs in the Turkish lines had got hold of a highly valued trophy—the regimental flag of the 52nd Italian Infantry. He steadfastly refused to sell his treasure, but a Turkish soldier secured the casing of the colours, which now reposes in Nesciat Bey's room at Azizieh. The trophy itself was bestowed upon the Arab's wife, and she strutted proudly about swathed in the flag, which would probably be handed down in her family as an heirloom of exceptional importance.

The journalists and others who invent these silly tales of dire enmity prevailing between Arabs and Turks seem to be quite ignorant of the solidarity of Islam. Italy's unprovoked attack on a province of the Sultan has produced a striking effect on the minds of Moslems all the world over. The warmest sympathy is displayed for the Turkish cause in what would ordinarily be the least likely quarters. Take, for instance, what happened in the Yemen. A series of sanguinary engage-

ments had been taking place for months past. Sanaa was besieged by the rebellious Arabs, and the usual "campaign in the Yemen" was in full swing. Italy presents her ultimatum, and the whole condition of affairs in the Arabian provinces is instantly changed. The Sultan receives a letter from the rebel chiefs, who say that, in face of the common outrage on Islam, all true followers of the Prophet must stand shoulder to shoulder. The present conflict in the Yemen must stand adjourned: when the fight against the infidel Italians is over they will once more take up arms against the Turkish forces: but for the time being all hostilities will cease, and they offer 100,000 Arabs for service in Tripoli. The siege of Sanaa thus relieved, the brave Turks who had held it so long against enormous odds marched out with all the honours of war, a little force under 1,000 strong, emaciated and gaunt from hunger. There is something of the best mediæval chivalry about this proposal of the Yemen chiefs to postpone the course of hostilities to a more convenient season. Poor Turkey! helpless for want of a fleet, while her gallant troops are eating their hearts out in vain longing to reach the enemy. If a mere handful of her Yemen garrison could

get across the Red Sea to Eritrea, within a week that colony would be added to the Ottoman Empire by means more effective than Italy's bogus "annexation" of Tripoli.

If the Italians desired to foment dissension between the Turks and the indigenous Arabs they might have made some headway in this direction by a more sagacious policy. They should have realized that the besetting sin of the Arabs is their avarice, and instead of squandering money like water in such things as the futile bombardment of places like Zouara, they might have employed a few hundred thousands of lire in wholesale bribery. This no doubt has been their policy to some extent. In Tripoli they bought Hassouna Pasha and some of his hangers-on. They did their utmost to corrupt the inhabitants of villages near Tripoli, like Gargaresch and Sansur. It was notorious all along the coast from Azilat to the frontier that a certain number of local Arabs had been tampered with by the Italians. The former Commandant of Zouara, Ahmed ben Montesor, was heavily bribed in order to facilitate the long-delayed landing at that point: but most fortunately the treachery of this scoundrel was detected in time, and he is now undergoing

a thoroughly deserved punishment in the common gaol at Gharian. His guilt was clearly demonstrated, and I cannot understand why Nesciat Bey did not hang so dangerous a traitor.

But apart from these spasmodic attempts to bribe Arabs here and there, the Italians have pursued a policy of sheer imbecility if their object was to win over the natives. Tripoli is the last rallying-ground for the unimpeded forces of Islam left in Africa, and the character of the people's faith is intense and even fanatical. Nevertheless the Italians initiated the campaign by vainglorious talk about the institution of the Cross for the Crescent in the new province. Jingo bishops, oblivious of every principle of Christ's teaching, hounded on the populace to a war which assumed the appearance of another Crusade against the unbelieving Moslem. Postcards printed in Italy bear the picture of a Bersaglieri soldier planting a flag with a Cross on it upon the minaret of a Turkish mosque. One of these offensive cards was in Fethi Bey's possession. The naval imbeciles along the Tripoli coast, not content with demolishing the wretched Arab houses, must needs smash holes in the walls and roofs of the mosques.

Caneva's panic-stricken infantry did not scruple in their blood-lust to slaughter women and children, let alone thousands of innocent men. The evidence for this is varied, cumulative, and irresistible. One of the war-correspondents tells of an Arab in Tripoli who, the moment he learnt of the murder of his brother by the Italian soldiery, seized his rifle and fled to the desert to join the defenders of his country and his faith. And yet the gentleman who supplies columns to the "New York Herald" talks about the hatred felt against the Turks by the Arabs, and reaches the culminating point of journalistic idiocy when he informs us that the Arabs do not want to fight, but are compelled to do so through fear of the Turks. The most elementary acquaintance with the relative numbers of Arabs and Turkish regulars might, one would think, prevent him from writing drivel of this sort.

So furious are the Arabs with those of their number who have thrown in their lot with the enemy that several terrible acts of reprisal have taken place. On the night of January 1st a body of Arabs entered Gargaresch and, as far as one can gather, indulged in a savage massacre of certain natives who had made

their peace with the Italians. "L' Ora" describes the assailants as "predoni," which would naturally mean Arab marauders. The "Giornale d' Italia," without furnishing a shred of evidence, states that the reprisals were the work of "un centinaio di regulari Turchi" accompanied by Bedouins. There were no "100 Turkish regulars" anywhere near Gargaresch on January 1st. Needless to say the "New York Herald" eagerly seized on this opportunity to slander the Turkish regulars, but the value of its obviously "padded" column can be gauged by the fact that the writer places the incident of the massacre at Sansur instead of Gargaresch, and talks of a garrison of 50 regulars at the former village, whereas there were to my knowledge only four men there. It is said by the Italians that at least one woman and a child were included in this night's work. No one could or would seek to justify these acts of savagery. One can only say that the Arabs, who in their brutal manner sought to punish the treachery of men who had deserted to the enemy, had more excuse to offer for their butchery than the "Christian" soldiers who carried out the oasis massacres of last October. The Italians are living in a fools' paradise if they imagine

that they have to any appreciable extent secured the "submission" or "allegiance" of the Tripolitan Arabs. Some of their enterprises in this direction are quite farcical. For example, on December 17th a large reconnoitring force entered Sansur, and after destroying the telegraph line as mentioned above very discreetly withdrew to their trenches. They gave out afterwards that they had obtained the submission of the Sansur population, such as it was. But if they succeed in winning the allegiance of villages in the neighbourhood of Tripoli they might at least have the courage and good faith to protect their newly discovered friends from the very natural vengeance of the fighting Arabs. If there were native families in Gargaresch who had formally given in their adherence to the Italian Government, it was a mean and cruel thing of General Frugoni to leave them absolutely unprotected. It is useless after the event for the Italian forces to indulge in mawkish whines about "La sanguinosa notte dell' Epifania," for which their own General is indirectly responsible. The fact, too, that Gargaresch is an oasis village within a few kilometres of the town of Tripoli indicates to what an extent the Italians are still a

beleaguered force after nearly three months of the campaign have elapsed. There is a curious and significant passage in the letter of a soldier at Derna which indicates how little trust can be reposed in stories of Arab submission or goodwill. The writer, a sergeant in the 11th Regiment of Infantry, informs his friend as follows: "I vecchi e i bambini che sono qui in gran numero sembrano sinceri ma abbiamo potuto constatare in molte occasioni che sono in relazione con i Turchi. Il 17 furono giustiziati 6 arabi perche avevano tirato contro i nostri."

Since the seizure of Tripoli and other coast towns the Italians have maintained the curious theory that the population generally of the vilayet are *ipso facto* Italian subjects. On this theory the mere fact that any Arab bears arms against the invader converts him forthwith into a rebel, who, if caught, is liable to summary execution, with or without trial. It is true that some Italian authorities, faced with the manifest absurdity of any such general theory of "occupation," limit the category of "rebels" to the Arabs who are found within the rather narrow confines of the territory actually and effectively occupied. At Tripoli, for instance, all Arab families dwelling inside

or within effective rifle-range of the Italian trenches of circumvallation are regarded as having given in their submission to the Italian Government. In other cases the term "rebel" is used in a general and comprehensive way to describe all armed Arabs, even those from remote Fezzan, who continue to bear arms against the invader since the ridiculous "annexation" was announced, apropos of which a Turkish officer remarked, "The Prince of Monaco might just as well have annexed China." But, as Mr. Lucien Wolf has clearly demonstrated in the "Nation" of November 11th, even the narrower application of the term "rebel" to natives in the immediate vicinity of the invading army is altogether unjustified by any rule or usage of warfare. The reply given in the House of Commons to a question by, I think, Mr. D. M. Mason, was wholly based on this erroneous conception, and most certainly ought not to have emanated from our own or indeed any well-informed Foreign Office. It is interesting to glance at the discussions that have taken place in various international conferences with respect to this very point—the position of the ordinary population of an invaded country. In the 1870 war, Germany, as is well known,

refused to acknowledge the belligerency of French peasants who rose in patriotic resistance against the invaders. When engaged in conflict with a uniformed enemy she refused to acknowledge the military status of peasants in blouses, and executed them when caught. These *francs-tireurs* stabbed and shot her sentries and generally caused her officers and men serious trouble and anxiety. In short, Germany certainly had a plausible case to offer for her drastic treatment of these un-uniformed troops. Nevertheless, public feeling was aroused by her line of conduct, and, as a direct outcome of this, representatives of the European Powers met at Brussels in 1874 in a Conference on the Rules of Military Warfare. Prominent among its "terms of reference" was the actual point raised by the oasis massacres of October. It was unanimously agreed that a *levée en masse* of an invaded population must be duly recognized as a legitimate form of warfare. Two Powers, however, Russia and Germany, were bent on the denial of belligerent rights to those inhabitants actually living within areas adequately occupied. The representatives of these two great military Powers endeavoured to secure the ratification of the following clause: "In-

dividuals belonging to the population of a country in which the enemy's power is already established, who shall rise in arms against them, may be handed over to justice, and are not regarded as prisoners of war." This proposal was keenly resisted by all the other Powers, and smaller States, led by Great Britain, France, *and Italy*. Nay, the motion to reject the suggested clause was actually proposed by Count Lanza, Italy's representative! The French representative, Baron Baude, spoke as follows: "Occupation does not constitute the right of possession. As long as a treaty of peace has not ceded an occupied country to the occupier, the inhabitants of the country are by right, if not in fact, subject to the laws which governed them before occupation, and it appears a strong measure to place them, so to speak, beyond the pale of the law. If, therefore, they rise, an armed resistance may be offered them: if they be vanquished, they cannot be treated otherwise than as belligerents." Our own spokesman, Lord Derby, tersely declared that "Her Majesty's Government refuse to be a party to any agreement, the effect of which would be to facilitate aggressive wars and to paralyse the patriotic resistance of an invaded people." Neverthe-

less, when in the autumn a question is asked of our responsible Minister involving this very point, the House of Commons is given to understand that the Italian reprisals were at any rate covered by the acknowledged rules of civilized war!

Again, as Mr. Lucien Wolf forcibly puts it, "Assuming that risings in occupied territories are contrary to the rules of war, are reprisals, as distinct from judicial punishment, legal?" It is perfectly clear that during the three days of panic and blood-lust which brought indelible disgrace on the Italian Army there was scarcely any pretence at even summary drumhead trials. It was simply a "go-as-you-please" massacre of men and women, old and young, guilty and innocent. Reprisals have never been sanctioned at any period or in any accepted code of the usages of war. In 1874 the Italian Count Lanza held that "fines should constitute the only means formally recognized of punishing violations of the laws and customs of war." And if one is met by the conventional but quite illogical rejoinder, "The Arabs disregard the usages of war [a pure assumption at the time], we are therefore free to follow suit," no better reply can be found, once more, than Count Lanza's remark,

"The violation of the laws of war by one of the parties cannot release the other from its obligations to observe them."

Finally, what is the value of the Italian contention that the Arabs in the oasis had by virtue of some proclamation or other by General Caneva been led to abandon their allegiance to the Sultan and become the docile subjects of Italy? Certain notables, including Hassouna, had, thanks to Italian bribes, notified their acceptance of the new regime in Tripoli, but the treachery of these rascals could not possibly cover the thousands of Arabs who occupied adobe huts among the palm-trees. These humble folk do not read "Proclamations," and were quite unaware of the fact that they were regarded as Italian subjects. Arabs will part with almost anything in the world rather than their beloved gun, whatever be its age or efficiency. So they hid their weapons away, and when opportunity came, rose up as French peasants rose up, and English villagers would also rise up, against the invaders of their country. The whole course of events would naturally have been foreseen by any General Staff which was not permeated by self-complacency and imbecility. The excitable journalists of the Italian newspapers lost their

heads as badly as the soldiers. Here is a passage from the "Stampa's" correspondent: "Once more I must insist on the urgent necessity of a fresh 'battue' [*sic*] throughout the whole oasis to clear it of Arabs. Under no pretext whatever must any single native be left between the town and the trenches. Every one found there, even without arms, is a traitor and must be shot." Stuff of this kind used occasionally to be contributed by valiant scribblers to the columns of South African and even the baser sort of English journals, when Boers continued to fight, despite the fact that a "Proclamation" fastened on the door of a deserted farm twenty miles off had, *ex hypothesi*, converted them into British subjects!

A further outrage, masquerading under the forms of military law, was committed by the Italians about a fortnight before Christmas. In the course of the incessant attacks upon the Italian lines delivered by Arabs in the earlier portion of the campaign up to November 26th, a considerable number of the assailants had broken through the enemy's defences and returned to their homes in the oasis and town. A treacherous Jew who was acquainted with these facts betrayed the names and whereabouts of these men who had settled once more

in their former homes, with the result that fourteen of them were arrested, summarily tried, and condemned to be hung in the open as "spies and rebels." This brutal sentence was duly carried out. When the news reached Azizieh the Arab levies were filled with furious indignation, as well they might be. The judicial murder of the fourteen men made also a deep impression on Signor de Felice, the Socialist Deputy from Sicily. This person had juggled with his political and moral conscience in order—a very arduous task—to justify a Socialist's enthusiasm for the war. He appears to have squared his misgivings by the strange anticipation that the war "would not cost a sou nor even a single drop of blood." But the hangings in the square were too much even for his strange caricature of Socialist morality, and he subsequently confessed in the "Giornale del Mattino" of Bologna that in consequence his "enthusiasm for the Tripolitan expedition had greatly cooled."

Food, as I have said, was abundant at Azizieh, and indeed at every Turkish post I visited. I was delighted to find that under the new conditions of military organization the men were admirably fed. No troops in Europe, our own perhaps excepted, are better fed than

the Turkish regulars of to-day. There was absolutely nothing "smart" about the appearance of the troops, and their uniforms and shoes were very ragged and shabby, but they enjoyed every day a good solid dinner of three courses, such as stewed meat, nicely cooked vegetables, and very tasty messes of rice cooked as a *pilaff*. Nesciat Bey and his staff ate practically the same food as the rank and file. Officers and men alike eat their rations in the same method, sitting round the central dish and helping themselves with their fingers. In the case of the officers a soldier servant brought basin, soap and towel for the washing of the hands before and after the meal. I remembered the miserable neglect of the soldiers in the bad old Abdul Hamid days. The men of Turkey's "New Model" are nowadays so well looked after in the matter of food, that a German authority has declared that they are "too well fed." A Moslem friend of mine who had served in the French Army declared that the rations of the Ottoman troops were infinitely better in every way than those he received during his service under the Republic.

I was surprised to find scarcely a trace of coffee anywhere in Tripoli except in the small

cafés of places like Xavia and Azilat. What the Turks and Arabs chiefly delight in is tea, which they boil until it becomes quite bitter, and then to counteract the bitterness the cup is half-filled with sugar. As sugar cost nearly 6 francs a kilo in the market, tea-drinking *à la Turque* was an expensive indulgence. When I occasionally gave a nice cup of tea to our tent sentries or other deserving Turks or Arabs, the grateful recipients were always astonished at the wonderful effects of my saccharine tabloids. As 100 of these tiny morsels of what the Arabs called "English sugar" can be bought for 6d., it is clear that the tabloids form the cheapest, most portable, and most effective means of sweetening tea or coffee in Tripoli. The Arabs persist in carrying their sugar about in big cones, a thoroughly wasteful habit, for the mass must needs be broken up by blows from a lump of iron, and quantities of small fragments and dust are spilt on the ground during the process.

Dates and bread seemed to be the ordinary diet of the irregular troops, with small cups of tea at the close of the meal, if they were in a stationary camp. The date-stones were all carefully kept for the camels, as this rather dreary diet is supposed to be good for the

creatures' insides. The camels, as a rule, made a great fuss over the date-stones, and the owner was generally compelled to pull open the animal's mouth and forcibly feed it like a suffragette. Every now and then he would pass his hand outside the long hairy neck and help portions of the unwelcome meal on their downward progress. Aristotle tells us of a gourmand who wished fervently that the gods had given him a larger neck in order to extend his appreciation of the pleasures of taste. So it may be the case that Providence has bestowed some compensating privileges on that strange product of evolution, the camel. When in the midst of its unending toil it fills its mouth by a surreptitious snatch at a thorn-bush or a big morsel of juicy cactus, one can only hope that these simple pleasures may be enhanced by the conditions of its structure, for there is little that is "merry and bright" in the normal existence of a camel! A small proportion of the Arabs possessed tents, but most of them squatted where they liked and found what shelter they could under walls, inside the sheds of the cavalry horses, and so on. Many brought their wives and children with them, and here and there you would see a family or several families together, curled up

in a hole and protected to some extent from the rain and wind by old pieces of sacking or tent-cloth stretched above them. Others had much snugger quarters in a few caves on the eastern side of the hill. Those who could find no better shelter simply huddled together—men, women, children, and camels—and lit small brushwood fires in the bitter cold of the early morning. During the whole of my stay in Tripoli I was fortunate enough to escape any of the torrential rains which cause the acme of discomfort to a camp like ours at Azizieh. Rain, of course, we had, but none of the fearful downpours which in an hour or two cut deep channels in the mountain-side, and would have simply washed my little tent away from its frail moorings on the slope.

Correspondents were supplied daily with two nice loaves each from the army bakehouse in the konak, but apart from this we catered for ourselves as we saw fit. Seppings-Wright and Ostler joined forces under the care of Selim, Bettelheim messed with the Red Crescent staff, and B—— and I fed together. Long experience in exploring and campaigning teaches one what to bring and what not to bring on such expeditions, and I had abundant supplies of useful tinned meats, fish, soups, and—a

most valued addition—excellent dried fruits and Cross and Blackwell's jams. B——, who was in charge of the housekeeping, would sally out and by dint of signs and tokens of many sorts secure for a trifling cost fowls, mutton, eggs, potatoes, carrots, chillies, etc. In short, my tent companion and I lived, when stationary, in great comfort. Simple meals of scrambled eggs, stewed chicken, vegetables, bread, fruit, and good coffee or tea are all a man can possibly need in the desert, and I never had a single day's illness. As a hygienic complement to the plain diet, B—— and I made tremendous marches on foot. We would cover nearly 100 miles in the four days, and when I rode I have been in the saddle for thirteen hours at a stretch. In short, both B—— and I were in the rudest health and the "pink of condition," when we left Tripoli. We had systematically boiled every drop of water that could possibly reach our lips, and rinsed every receptacle with permanganate of potash. That is the golden rule for a healthy life in camp. But other common-sense rules of hygiene are as follows:—Wear a flannel cholera belt, if not all day, at any rate after sundown; eat sparingly at all times; never bathe in the cool of the evening; never eat

any food which is at all dusty or gritty from sand; when heated by exercise, either go to bed or else rub yourself dry with a rough towel and put on a clean vest and shirt—cold perspiration is terribly dangerous at all times; drink no alcohol, but plenty of boiled water or weak tea; if you have no boiling water to "wash up" the plates, etc., pour some strong solution of permanganate into the water used for this purpose; it is absurd to sterilize your drinking-water and at the same time to expose your plates, cups, knives, and forks to the contact of myriads of cholera germs.

Yet, all said and done, there was one channel of possible infection which it was almost impossible to close, viz., the bites of parasitic insects. This is not a pleasing topic, but, after all, the suffering inflicted on everybody in Tripoli, old and young, rich and poor alike, by hungry swarms of insects was so serious that one may be excused for referring to this scourge. Fleas were numerous and aggressive, but it was more especially the smaller and nastier parasites that went far to make our lives a burden to us. I was first attacked as I lay on the ground at Bir Terin, and I can honestly say that from that evening I had no rest from my tormentors by day or night until

I finally reached the Tunis hotel on my return. We all seemed quite helpless in the presence of these horrid insects, and our bodies were covered with bites from head to foot. So cruel was the irritation that on six occasions I took five grains of veronal in order, if possible, to secure a few hours' sleep. Ammonia gave some slight relief, but the mischief was on too big a scale for this palliative treatment. Sulphur ointment, too, was a partial remedy. But until one could reach a place where everything one had on could be boiled, and oneself thoroughly scrubbed in a Turkish bath, the best and only thing to do was to "grin and bear it." Behind the physical irritation of the manifold bites—at times almost insupportable—there was the question in one's thoughts, Whence have these horrid visitants come, and what are their mandibles injecting into my veins and arteries? When one sees cholera corpses within a few yards of the spot on which one's clothes lie during the night, these things give one furiously and anxiously to think!

The greatest and most original of living English novelists has more than once dealt graphically with the appalling force and exuberance of insect life. In the "Food of

the Gods," that tyrant of the pools, the voracious larva of the dragon-fly, grown to prodigious size, fastens on the arm that invades its lair. Again, in the last wonderful scene of desolation in the Time Machine's progress through the æons, evolution has at length enabled the vitality of insect life to "come by its own," and a monstrous creature of the earwig type drags its scaly, articulated body over the beach of the tideless ocean. If anybody wishes to realize what a "plague of lice" might mean as a national punishment, let him go to Tripoli.

CHAPTER V

IN THE GHARIAN MOUNTAINS

THE western advance of the Italians had effected little or nothing, while that on the eastern side had ended in a shocking disaster. It seemed clear, therefore, that in all probability the invaders would not take the offensive again for some considerable time, and that from the point of view of any actual fighting, little could be achieved for the moment by a sojourn at Azizieh. I therefore deemed the time opportune for a journey to the Gharian range and the village of that name, which contains a large base hospital, chiefly used for convalescents. On Dec. 20th I noticed a troop of twelve camels setting out for Gharian, upon each of which was perched a sick or wounded Turkish soldier. The camel is not an ideal means of conveyance for a man suffering, say, from dysentery or fractured limbs, but the roads in Tripoli admit of nothing else,

though the Turks, with their usual consideration, had placed an Italian baggage-wagon at Mr. Montagu's service, while their own senior officers, in a much more serious plight, were jolted over the dreadful path on camel-back.

In the afternoon I set out for the market to secure a good camel for the journey, as Fethi Bey had already been kind enough to promise me a horse. It was at this period of the campaign by no means easy to find either horses or camels for private use at Azizieh. There was naturally enough, in an army compelled to cover so vast an area, plenty of work for the limited number of horses which Nesciat Bey had been able to bring out of Tripoli or purchase from the Arabs. And, further, as all the best of the horses were needed for the cavalry in the lines and outposts, the animals at Azizieh were a very scratch lot, in a more or less ailing and feeble condition. As to camels, a veritable corner in these valuable beasts had been made by some of the larger owners, and as the army needed practically every camel that could be provided, the most exorbitant prices were demanded and obtained from the Government. Camels at the end of the year were fetching no less than 6 to 8 francs a day for military purposes.

Indeed, if any factor was needed to make the war popular with the Arabs, it is the amazing prosperity of all local trade under present conditions. The camel-owners and camel-drivers are taking the tide of their good fortune at the flood. Go where you will in the interior of Tripoli and you find along the rude desert-tracks camels in caravans, small or large, driving a busy transport trade between various Turkish posts. Good horses are eagerly sought for, difficult to find, and very dear. Captain Bettelheim's purchase of a really sound animal for £26 was the best bargain I came across. At Gharian a Turkish officer, who, after long wanderings through the south of Tunis, had at length managed to cross the frontier, told me he had to pay 1,000 francs (£40) for a horse which was not as good as Bettelheim's. Trade was booming in Tripoli! Look at the busy markets in every town or big village, with ready purchasers for all the meat, vegetables, fruit, sugar, tea, charcoal, and so forth that the jubilant vendors could bring in. In every direction women and children settled like locusts on the brushwood, and, braving the cruel thorns of the nebek bushes, cut down bundles to be sold at 2 soldi (=1 penny),

in order to cook the delicious gallettas or warm the bodies of the Arab warriors in the bitter cold of the late evening hours. Camels were ubiquitous; you met them at every turn—camels brown and camels yellow, often accompanied by pretty little camelkins of a fluffy whiteness.

In short, the war is enriching the great mass of the Tripolitans from every point of view, while at the same time inflicting a crushing expenditure on the taxpayers of Italy; and if your sociologist wishes to see poverty at its worst, let him travel amongst the towns and villages of Apulia and Calabria.

At length I found a camel which had not been commandeered for military purposes and was promptly asked 50 francs for the return journey to Zouara via Gharian, almost the identical distance which had on my arrival cost me 15! These exorbitant camel-men were masters of the situation, and so I was glad when on my flat refusal to pay 50 francs a compromise was effected, and the Arab owner definitely agreed in the presence of several bystanders to take my baggage early next morning at the sum agreed upon, viz., 40 francs. After breakfast all my kit was packed and I sat under the shade of my tent waiting

for the camel. Nine o'clock came, ten o'clock, and still no sign of our transport animal and its driver. The rascally owner had shamelessly broken his contract, and having, I presume, secured some more lucrative job, had simply left me in the lurch. We had lost three precious hours of daylight, and I confess I should have liked to see the brute who had treated us so scurvily brought before the Commandant of the Zaptiehs and immured for a couple of days in the konak prison. However, one gains nothing in an Arab environment from loss of temper: the waste of mental and bodily tissue caused by violent feelings of anger or long and fatiguing marches helps to provide a nidus for wandering microbes. It is always amusing to hear some newly arrived correspondent talk spaciously about "keeping these coloured people in their places," and "disciplining the Arabs." The more experienced traveller is well aware that the best spirit to cultivate is an intermixture of genial firmness with a large proportion of stoical ἀταραξία. It is useless to formulate *a priori* theories of what is to be accomplished in any time limits, however generous—whatever may be the nature of the agreement, the best one can possibly hope for

is a compromise between what the employer requires and the employed will grant. The sanctity of a contract is the last thing that appeals to an ordinary Arab. I have been brought into personal contact with very many races, and I can honestly say that the only people I usually dislike and mistrust are the Arabs. With the exception of their undeniable courage and powers of endurance there are few salient virtues amongst these men. They are, with, of course, striking exceptions, mirthless, grim, ungrateful, cruel, and, above all, filled with an absorbing spirit of greed from childhood to old age. Perikles in his great speech states that the love of honour is the sentiment which abides latest in the human mind: in the case of the Arab it is the love of money. The feelings of the average Arab, expressed or latent, are fixed on "feluss" and "baksheesh," and in order to make himself master of a trifle he will sometimes stoop to brutal violence and even bloodshed. During the present campaign a Turkish regular who left his post with 3 francs in his pocket was found robbed of his money, with his throat cut and his body ripped open by an Arab knife. On leaving the rock-dwelling where I slept on December 22nd, the trog-

lodyte family who had brought us water—an old man, his son, daughter-in-law and children—clamoured for baksheesh. I gave the old man 3 piastres—a handsome payment—for division amongst the various claimants. The old man snatched the coins, and hiding them in a fold of his filthy rags, refused to part with them. A frightful roar of abuse and recrimination followed in the family circle, the sounds of which pursued us as we wound our way up the mountain. The old man's face was absolutely distorted with greed, and of all the baser passions surely avarice imprints the most hideous traces on the features. If Plato's suggestion be correct, that the countenance is the mirror of the soul, how little of the god and how much of the beast must animate the character reflected in the face of an average Arab! His treatment of his animals is on a par with that he metes out to his fellow-men. While the Turk is always kind to children and animals, the Arab is unequalled for his callous indifference to animal suffering. His alleged love for his horse is a mere fable. If his horse or his donkey or his camel can cover so many miles from stage to stage, he rarely troubles to water them on the way, even when the water is easily acces-

sible. If a frightful wound caused by his own brutality or carelessness does not actually injure the progress of the beast, he leaves it untended to fester in the sun. At Shousha, just before starting, I noticed to my horror a most shocking wound in the flank of the horse I had hired the evening before. Its Arab rider had driven his large flat stirrup so savagely against the poor beast's side that the flesh was torn away and a portion of the ribs exposed. I called my Arab servant and pointed out the dreadful injury, but he was quite bewildered by my concern, and simply could not be brought to understand why I protested against such treatment. At length he openly laughed, and asked me why I was upset by the appearance of the wound; it did not, he said, prevent the horse from travelling quickly, and it would certainly accomplish the stipulated work for which I had paid, viz., my conveyance on its back as far as Zouara. It is useless to argue with an Arab about cruelty—he does not recognize it as a vice, except when it involves pecuniary loss. Just outside my tent at Azizieh lay one morning a camel. A portion of its hump had been torn off by the careless packing of its heavy load, and the bone was splintered. The poor

creature must have suffered tortures. I sent the owner off to the hospital to ask for some ointment or lotion, but he came back saying that the attendant declared they had only medicines for men, none for camels. I gave him a solution of permanganate of potash and got him to wash the shocking wound with it thoroughly, and we then strapped over the raw surface an old straw hat. On this occasion the Arab did evince some concern about the injury to his beast, but it was, as in fact he told me, due entirely to the fear that until the wound had healed the camel could not be used for 6 francs a day! This attitude of mind—so foreign to Western sentiments and so hateful—forms a more or less normal ingredient in the Oriental character. There is, as far as one can remember, no single precept in the Old Testament as to the kindly treatment of animals except the curious injunction against the muzzling of the ox that trod out the corn. And even this solitary exception is regarded by St. Paul as simply and entirely an allegorical method of urging congregations to support their ministers! "Has God any care for oxen?" he asks—the thing was inconceivable to him.

Foiled in my original search for a camel,

I was fortunate enough to find one which had conveyed Seppings-Wright's baggage from Gharian, and by midday managed to get off. I had already secured a serviceable mule, and although, in view of his difficulties, I had asked Fethi Bey not to trouble about providing me with a horse, he had most kindly given me one. B—— therefore, who accompanied me to Gharian, had a mount as well as myself, the mule being far more surefooted and more comfortable altogether than the horse. Seppings-Wright kindly arranged for a photograph of Bettelheim, Ostler, himself, and me—the four correspondents present with the Turkish forces—the button being pressed by B——, and after saying good-bye to my three companions, I at length began the long ride to the foot of the mountains, where we were to spend the night before climbing up to Gharian next day. Farewell to Azizieh with all its delightful Turks, kindly Englishmen, brave and greedy Arabs, and malignant microbes! When during a brief halt on our way I surveyed through my field-glasses the busy camp we had left behind us, another Arab funeral was slowly ascending the slopes of Jebel Zoweiah to the little cemetery on the summit.

It is not 20 miles from Azizieh to the little

fonduk amongst the palm-trees where the journey to Gharian can be broken. For the first 17 miles the road is, for Tripoli, quite a passable one, but at the close, when the foot-hills begin, the track lies over stones, hollows, and boulders, and to make our course still more arduous, darkness had come upon us, thanks to our tardy departure from Azizieh. I do not think I have ever, except in my exploration of Socotra, travelled over so vile a "road." Riding was out of the question, and the led horse stumbled continually. Amid the holes and hillocks of this rugged track, lit only by the dim radiance of the stars, we walked by faith rather than by sight, and good fortune alone saved us from heavy falls or sprained ankles. The Turkish regular who had accompanied us as escort from headquarters trudged steadily along, his Mauser slung over his shoulder, and he seemed as glad as ourselves when at length a twinkling light near a tall palm-tree brought us to the end of our tedious march. We entered a dirty little yard surrounded by high embankments and found ourselves in a veritable place of mystery. Two rock-dwellings stood side by side, and the larger of them was assigned to us for the night. It was a room of considerable size, about

24 feet square and 12 feet high, hewn out of the solid rock. Round three sides ran a broad ledge of stone, and from this ledge rose three fine arches supporting the roof, in the centre of which was the raised design of a square with two diagonals. There was no other ornamentation and no trace whatever of any carved inscriptions. The lintels of the door were quite 6 feet in thickness. The smaller rock-dwelling occupied by the greedy Arab family was much smaller and of altogether inferior workmanship, with no ledges and no arches.

What were these mysterious chambers, and who were the men who shaped them out of the rock? I should like to discover the opinion of some archæological expert. The only thing quite clear to a layman like myself is that the rock-chamber must have been the handiwork of some race long antecedent to the present occupiers of these desert oases. It is true that in earlier centuries the Arabs could build the Alhambra in Spain and the beautiful interior of the Sidi Okba Mosque at Kairouan, but I am not aware that in those palmy days of Arabic taste and workmanship their craftsmen ever excavated dwellings from the solid limestone of the hill-sides. In recent centuries

the glory has indeed departed from Arabic architecture. Those of us who saw the ugly and shapeless tomb erected over the Mahdi's body at Omdurman could estimate the level to which the theory and practice of Arabic building had fallen. Moreover, a race which nowadays is too indolent to construct for its own occupation anything beyond the miserable stone and mud hovels of the normal Arab village, could never have engaged in a task so arduous and prolonged as the hewing out of a home from dense rock with poorly tempered tools. I imagine, therefore, that the wonderful room in which I slept owed its origin to a race long vanished from Northern Africa. The former existence of such a race is quite clear from a cloud of witnesses in the shape of fragmentary monuments now described by the Arabs under the generic title of *boyut kedim* (ancient buildings). On the desert track from Gharian to Xavia is a halting-place called Sen, and all over the interior of Tripoli this name (usually "Senam") frequently occurs. Round Jebel Mesjid, for example, the use of this term to denote villages, wells, etc., is especially common. The word means "idols," and is commonly associated with the existence in the neighbourhood of monoliths, cairns, and

round towers, identical with those found in Brittany, Malta, England, and Ireland. The monolithic remains of Stonehenge and Great Rollright and the curious towers of Queen's County find their exact counterpart in the plains and hill-sides of Tripoli! Whence then came this unknown race, which in the dim background of history lived and laboured in regions so diverse? I am quite out of my depth in attempting any solution of this problem; I merely start the hare and leave the pursuit thereof to more capable hunters. I will only venture to suggest that the beautifully constructed chamber in which I slept was probably a tomb or temple; there were deep indentations in the lintels of the door for the reception of some kind of heavy barrier. The rougher room may possibly have provided a dwelling for a custodian or priest.

That mighty traveller Hadrian had doubtless passed through these regions on his way from Lambessa to the culture and repose of Egypt and the society of his Antinous. What a gifted and cultured Roman must the imperial tourist have been! If one of Socrates' alternatives came to pass, and familiar converse with the illustrious dead were one of life's rewards when life is ended, how delightful an

experience it would be to talk with the great Hadrian, who, thanks to the wonders of the *pax Romana*, could travel from Britain to Persia without the interference of a single frontier or custom-house. His progress was no mere globe-trotting, for the course of his wanderings in North Africa, as elsewhere, was marked by arches, viaducts, baths, temples, columns, roads, and other stately memorials of the beneficent sovereign who is described on one of his coins by the startling legend, ὁ σώτηρ τοῦ κόσμου, "The saviour of the world"!

Clear evidences of the Roman occupation met the eyes from time to time in Tripoli. In a mound of sand near my tent at Azizieh an Arab found a *denarius*. There was practically nothing left of any image or inscription, except the blurred outlines of the Emperor's head. The great Empire had left its marks even on the hill-tops of Gharian. In strolling from the market-place to the konak I saw lying at the mouth of a well the mutilated capital of a gigantic Roman column, and in half an hour a soldier brought me a copper medallion, fairly well preserved, on the reverse of which was the spirited effigy of a horse. He refused to sell it to me—it had, of course, little intrinsic value, and I had no opportunity

to examine it carefully, but it evidently belonged to the Byzantine period.

On the summit of a hill some 5 miles from headquarters is a huge mound which is said to be part of a Roman vallum—whether this is so or not I cannot say; but it is probable that these breezy heights were once garrisoned by the legionaries, with other strategic places still further south and west like Ghadames, which in Roman times was a great commercial centre with seven diverging roads. How striking a contrast between the amazing energy and success of the Roman soldiers and administration in past ages and the feeble initiative and lack of capacity which animates their successors in the twentieth century!

When we crept out of our rocky bedroom at 7 a.m. for a little survey of our surroundings before breakfast, our eyes feasted on a delightful scene. Above and around us rose the slopes of the mountains, crested with olive-trees. Just below us was the rocky bed of Wady-el-Jair, torn and dishevelled from the violence of the descending flood, but now showing only a thin stream. But oh! the joys of running water after the foul wells of all our former halting and sojourning—

ὑδοιπόρῳ διψῶντι πηγαῖον ῥέος.

There was no need to boil this sparkling water for our bottles, and the taste of the tea made from it was deliciously different from the decoctions of Azizieh and Zouara. The poor horse and mule, who had received scanty attention on the preceding night, were refreshed by deep draughts of the cool streamlet. Then commenced the ascent by as rugged a mountain-path as one could well imagine. Here and there we struggled over heaps of loose stones, while in other places the limestone shale of the hill-side formed a series of steps so conveniently and regularly arranged that it resembled human handiwork. Great masses of red earth lay here and there beside our path, and a shrub like heather covered the slopes as far as the eye could reach. The soldier led the two animals—no light task on such a track—and the camel pursued the even tenor of its upward way. Some Arabs who preceded us blazed away at intervals in order, I suppose, to hear the thunderous echoes provoked by the discharge of their rifles. Halfway up I overtook a Turkish regular who came from Ismir and spoke to me in Greek, contrasting the delights of his Turkish home with the dull and dreary plain below us. He was, like most of his comrades, a very simple,

good-natured fellow, and told me he had started from Azizieh the day before with four ration loaves, but he had given a good deal of them away to begging Arabs, and so had none left. I offered him a piece of our last loaf, but he steadfastly refused, and at length, when he took it, gave nearly all of it to another soldier higher up who was without any rations whatever.

After climbing for nearly two hours we reached the summit of the pass and halted for a rest. The view was magnificent. An endless succession of mountain summits extended east and west, divided by deep and well-wooded valleys. Far below lay the vast plains between the Gharian range and the coast. Jebel Zoweiah looked like a tiny hillock in the distance, with Azizieh as a small white patch nestling at its base. Through the pellucid air it was almost possible to see Tripoli itself, and the faint boom of a distant gun was audible from the spot where we stood.

As we gazed upon the vast expanse of sand and rocky hillocks at our feet and the deep ravines and hill-sides strewn with stones and boulders, I realized the natural strength of what may perhaps become the third line of

defence for the Ottoman forces. Even if guns could ever reach the foot of these rugged mountains, neither artillery nor cavalry could be of the slightest use in such surroundings, and certainly the Italian infantry, which hides itself in trenches and dare not move against ridiculously inferior forces without the protection of a formidable array of field or naval guns, is not the sort of army which would make much impression on the Gharian position! A Turco-Arabic force posted along this range, with abundant food and good water close at hand, could defy the timid Italians for years. The Turkish Redifs who advanced against Velestino carried stones in their pockets to throw at the enemy, and I should imagine that a few boulders well managed might be adequate to keep the Italians at the foot of these hills. This range, as I have said, might naturally become the final stage in an organized and regular defence. But I am very doubtful whether the Italians will ever be able to drive the Ottoman forces much farther inland than they are at present. Their latest attempt at Bir Tobras was a signal failure, and even if every Ottoman regular was slain to-morrow the Arabs would continue the war indefinitely.

Another hour brought us into the midst of

cultivation. The young corn was just appearing above the furrows, and olive-trees by the hundred were growing on either side of the track. Within a few miles of Gharian we came across three artillery wagons, and I wondered how on earth these broad, heavy, lumbering things had been dragged up the rocky sides of the mountain. Some mountain guns packed on mules had been brought down from Gharian to Azizieh a few days before the fight at Bir Tobras, but this was a very different matter from dragging artillery wagons up this almost impassable track.

The whole line of approach to Gharian from the summit of the pass presented a delightful picture of rural prosperity, and the green of the trees and shrubs formed a welcome relief to eyes long accustomed to the neutral tints of the desert. The air was laden with the scent of the wild thyme, dear to the bees of Hymettus, and birds and butterflies flew hither and thither amongst the olive orchards. I noticed the butcher-bird or shrike, the ubiquitous sparrows and larks, the wheatear, a few doves, some hawks, and a number of small birds like buntings. There was no great variety of butterflies or moths, but that commonest of all, the "painted lady," was much in

evidence, and in the evening I captured several pale "noctuæ." I had no killing-bottle or net with me, but I managed to secure a few specimens of beetles, butterflies, and other insects, and these I hope may be of interest to entomological friends. One may safely surmise that neither the botany nor entomology of this neglected province has ever been adequately studied, though it is doubtful whether much variation would exist between the animal and vegetable life of Tripoli and that of Egypt. The zoological conditions of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis are quite distinct.

I was not prepared for the busy scene of activity which met my eyes when at length I entered the village of Gharian. I had thought of it as a single konak perched on the hills, with a few humbler dwellings in the vicinity, a kind of nice, hygienic Azizieh amongst the olives. But here was quite a large place, with, I should imagine, over two thousand inhabitants. The big white konak stood out against the skyline, and as I rode thither I felt glad that our arrival had not been deferred till nightfall, for on either side and within a few yards of the bridlepath yawned quarry-like pits, which were in no way fenced off, and would prove a real

peril in the dark, as ordinarily there would be nobody to warn the stranger of the dangerous approach. A few yards farther on I came across the most spick-and-span building I had seen in the vilayet, the primary school of the district, with clean white walls and painted woodwork. It was indeed an agreeable surprise to find in this poverty-stricken province that the authorities never seemed to grudge money for their elementary schools. At Xavia the school was built on quite a large scale, so large that when we arrived in the square we mistook it for the konak. At Azizieh, again, the nice cool building used for a hospital was also in times of peace the village school. Even Abdul Hamid, with all his faults, took a real interest in national education and established no less than two hundred schools for girls in the various parts of the Empire. Apropos of this ill-starred monarch, it seems to be very doubtful if he is alive. The house assigned him at Salonika is still described as his residence, but does anybody ever see the alleged occupant? The people in the Jebel district belong for the most part to the ascetic sect of the "Khamsin," who abstain from alcohol and tobacco and refuse to acknowledge the Khalifate of the Sultan. The

mosques of Gharian and other Jebel villages are therefore closed to the Turks, as the prayer for the Sultan is omitted in the Friday services.

The school at Gharian is at present in the hands of the medical staff, and a well-equipped base hospital receives invalids and convalescents from Azizieh, and certainly, by the time a victim to, say, incipient dysentery has been jolted on a camel for 20 miles and has finally surmounted the dreadful mountain track, he must indeed be glad of the nice, clean bed and careful attention he receives at Gharian. Some 200 yards farther on, the great konak, our place of temporary abode, looked in the twilight like some vast mediæval castle. It was a huge structure, delightful in its picturesque disregard for regularity of design or economy of space. Dating from the period of Gouma, the great bandit chief who ruled vast districts of Tripoli before the Turkish annexation, the konak had been built on the edge of a hill, and from its western terrace there was a sheer drop into the valley beneath, and magnificent views of the mountains as they stretched toward Kasr Nefren. On our arrival we were most kindly received by the Commandant, Tahir Bey, an Arab officer, who placed an excellent suite of rooms at our

disposal. Directly I entered it I recognized from the barred and trellised windows that I was to spend Christmas Eve in a harem. *Honi soit qui mal y pense:* the fair ladies who once dwelt within these darkened rooms had long since vanished. Our arrival had evidently been expected, for the boards and stonework were still damp from a recent scrubbing. The apartments we occupied included a kitchen, lavatories, and servants' quarters. In short, the ladies, at the period more or less remote when their presence graced these walls, had the best and most comfortable rooms in the konak, as indeed was only fitting, and apropos of such domestic arrangements it is worth mentioning that the educated Turks, despite their gratitude to Pierre Loti for his chivalrous support in the present conflict, never hesitate to condemn the pictures of Turkish home life presented in the charming "Les Désenchantées" as unreal and misleading. And one cannot help believing that stories composed by outsiders about the grievances of another nation's women tend to be exaggerated and distorted. Women have such matters very largely in their own hands all the world over, and if the Turkish women in the twentieth century are still to a large extent cut

off from certain social privileges enjoyed by their sisters in Christian communities, it is because they are content as a body with the existing usages of Moslem society. If the women of Turkey desire a change in the direction of greater freedom and ordinary social relations with the sons, brothers, and fathers of their friends, this change will undoubtedly take place. In fact, it is to some degree already taking place under the influence of the new and vigorous spirit breathed into the national life by the Neo-Turkish movement. There is another powerful factor tending in the same direction. I was surprised to find amongst the Turkish officers, doctors, and civilians—more especially those of the highest culture and position—that the vast majority were unmarried. Prudential and economic reasons may to a certain extent account for some of the prevailing celibacy, but an officer who had a long talk with me on the subject told me that there was a growing unwillingness to tie oneself for life to any one whose character and disposition were practically unknown. "Look," said he, "at the number of my friends who for this very reason, and no other, seek wives amongst Austrians, French, Italians, and so on. As for

myself, I'll never marry a woman whose face I haven't seen and whose temper I haven't tested."

As this spirit diffuses itself amongst the men of the new Turkey, the ladies will speedily and readily adapt themselves to changed circumstances. As it is, the wearing of the *yashmak* in order to conceal the features has become amongst the higher classes in Turkey little more than a formality. The small strip of muslin which is tied round the cheeks of an Ottoman lady is very *légère*, and does not in any adequate fashion hide the face. And oddly enough, if the *yashmak* was abolished throughout the whole, as it is already in part, of the Moslem world, no violation whatever even of the letter of the Koran's precepts would be involved. The Koran does, it is true, enjoin a modest and retiring demeanour on the part of women when they meet men in public, but the only injunction as to any necessary use of dress for this purpose is the very interesting command that women should *cover their hair*—not their face—in public. This stringent precept is far older than Mohammed, and forms the subject matter of one of the must difficult passages in the Epistles to the Corinthians. No woman, says the

Apostle, must appear in the assembly with her head uncovered—"she must have authority on her head because of the angels," *i.e.*, some means of avoiding the evil glances of bad spirits—such, at any rate, is perhaps the best explanation of this mysterious passage. When one hears an Englishwoman expressing pity for her oppressed sister in the harem, it is amusing to remember that long before the "Married Women's Property Act" was placed on our Statute Book, this elementary right on the part of a woman to the possession of her own belongings had existed in Turkey for centuries. And, to argue from the analogy of a tree and its fruit, one may safely conclude that the mothers of these Osmanlis—clean, sober, honourable, kindly, and brave—cannot be the frivolous and empty-headed odalisques of the rich or the oppressed and neglected wives of the poor, as we might be led to imagine from popular representations of "harem life" in Western journals and novels.

After we had bustled about and secured a good meal—a soldier had been assigned us as a servant—a group of five officers came to see us. One of these, Orkhan Bey, spoke a little English, to B——'s great joy, and amongst the others was the P.M.O., a smart young doctor

fresh from the schools of Paris, where he had made a special study of diseases of the eye. The Commandant came in again to see if we were comfortable, and he sent a soldier for two blankets for B——. The charming courtesy of this Arab officer was in marked contrast to the treatment we received at Azilat from another Arab, Ali Fehmi, of whom I speak later on.

After some sentimental and appropriate reflections from B—— on what people were doing on that festive occasion in England, we fell asleep, and next morning I began to explore the varied interests of wonderful Gharian. In the big courtyards of the konak were scores of peevish camels, and beside them the loads which they would soon carry to Azizieh. These consisted of big 50 kilo sacks of farina and several tons of ammunition. It was not my business or desire to ask whence the cartridges had arrived at the hill-fortress or how—the main thing was that they were there. Most of the cases were marked "Metallpatroner," and one or two bore the familiar legend "Safety explosive cartridges." Heavy indeed was the handicap imposed on the Ottoman forces in their heroic defence! How signal the contrast between themselves

and the raiders as regards—to go no farther—the question of supply! Small arms ammunition, and more especially the shells so beloved by their infantry, can be brought from Sicily in twenty-four hours. The Ottoman troops, "isolés du monde entier," to quote the pathetic remark of a staff officer, have to depend for the transport from post to post of their supplies on the exasperatingly slow progress of camel caravans. The one rich piece of luck enjoyed by them in this campaign is the fact alluded to elsewhere, that although Hakki Pasha's imbecility caused the withdrawal of 75 per cent. of the garrison from Tripoli, the full supplies of ammunition were left behind. Large stores of ammunition had been accumulated in the Tripoli forts and magazines, but under the conditions of the mean ultimatum and the hurried evacuation of the town it was of course quite impossible for the Turks to take with them more than a few field-guns and a relatively small number of shells. It needs no less than nineteen horses to drag an ordinary field-gun over the desert, and the transport of artillery ammunition on any large scale would have necessitated the employment of hundreds of mules, which were not available in the hurry of the moment.

Hence the triumphant photographs of field-guns "captured" by the Italians at Tripoli—guns which the Turks were compelled to leave behind them. And from the commencement of this inglorious attack on the Sultan's territory the Italian correspondents, in the absence of more creditable feats of arms, have in grandiloquent phrases glorified such cheap successes as the mere discovery of a useless and abandoned battery.

The sun blazed hotly on Christmas morning, and under the shade of a little building some 200 yards away I came across five Italian prisoners. Their experience of active service had been brief and bitter. They belonged to the 93rd Regiment, which had apparently formed part of certain reinforcements sent to Tripoli since the unfortunate reverses of October. After about 200 of their regiment had effected a landing to the east of Tripoli they were furiously attacked by a number of Arabs, and, with the exception of some who managed to sheer off again in the boats and the five prisoners at Gharian, the whole landing-party was cut to pieces. How the five managed to save their lives neither they themselves nor anybody else seemed to know. The Arabs were naturally enough in a state

of absolute frenzy over the Italian massacres in the oasis, and there was little disposition on their part to take prisoners. Possibly some Turkish officer or soldier happened to be present at the critical moment and intervened to save the lives of the five survivors. Sometimes, too, the wretched Italian soldiers, terror-stricken by the furious assaults of the Arabs, have raised the cry of "We are Moslems too! *La Allah ila Allah, wa Muhammad Rasul Allah!*" and the simple Arabs, thus easily imposed upon, have spared the lives of these hasty converts to Islam! The Turkish officers have done all they could to prevent Arabs from killing their prisoners, and Nesciat Bey even offered a substantial sum of money for every Italian who should be brought to him alive—the strongest inducement he could have offered to an Arab! As it was, it took no less than 60 Turkish regulars to escort these five Italians from the front, and in order to send them to Gharian they were partially disguised as Ottoman soldiers in tarbushes, etc. Over 100 Italian prisoners had already been dispatched under escort to Fezzan, not only as a useful advertisement along the whole route of the fact that Italy was not having it all her own way, but also because amongst the

Fezzani, a hard-working, intelligent, and civilized community, the security of the prisoners would be guaranteed. A party of five civilians, who had reached Fezzan before the declaration of war on some scientific (? commercial) expedition, were detained there, as it was considered unsafe to send them down to the coast or to either of the frontiers, all so far distant.

One of the five men at Gharian, a corporal, was an ardent Socialist and strongly opposed to the whole policy of the war, which he declared was engineered by the *affaristi*, or financiers, of his country. He and his friends looked rather bored with the monotony of their existence; but they were unanimous in stating that they were well treated and given as good food as the Turkish regulars received, which is saying a good deal. I asked them if they would like me, with the Commandant's permission, to send to their friends news of their well-being, but they told me this had already been done. The Turks had paid for telegrams sent by the prisoners to their friends in Italy, and had promised to receive on their behalf via the Tunisian frontier any Christmas presents which might be sent. Later, Nesciat Bey actually accorded his prisoners permission to write letters to their friends, which were

duly forwarded by the regular postal service via Dehibat. The interior of Tripoli was, of course, still administered by the civil government of the vilayet, and it was necessary to purchase Tripolitan stamps in order to send our letters to England or elsewhere abroad.

The existence of the large pits which I had noticed on my arrival was at once explained by a visit in daylight. Here I was at last in the land of the Troglodytes! These holes—the word "gharian" means "caves"—met one at every turn, some of them quite 40 feet across and of about the same depth. Their precipitous sides were scooped out into numerous caverns, and at the bottom in some cases lay a pool of foul, green water, which served, I suppose, to supply the washing and drinking needs of these strange subterranean inhabitants. In most cases I could detect no means of communication with the outer, or rather upper world, but as it was practically impossible to scale the sheer and friable sides of the pits, some more or less secret passages must exist, with an outlet at some distance from the cave-men's home. These Troglodytes had rather a bad name at Gharian, as they were said to be rough and unfriendly, and to resent any familiarity

ab extra, however well-intentioned. In fact, the Turkish soldiers joked with them sometimes and said they kept their ugly wives below ground because they were jealous. I stood on the edge of one of the pits, and, on looking down, was roundly abused by a young virago, who told me to go away; but I could see that she was deeply interested, all the same, in the strange male apparition which had appeared on what was virtually her normal horizon, and she called two other viragoes, worse than herself, who also squeaked and gibbered at me with curious looks. Their high-pitched voices made me remember how more than two thousand years ago the "Father of History" had summed up his account of the Troglodytes in the words: "They feed on serpents and lizards, and speak no language like other people, but screech like bats" (τετρίνασι κατά περ αἱ νυκτερίδες). Repulsed by the lady Troglodytes, I sat down on the capital of a former Roman column hard by, and thought of the days when I read Herodotus and explored all the delectable treasures of his rich storehouse. I reflected, too, that, comparatively speaking, it was easier in the fourth century B.C. to secure information about the interior regions of Africa than it is now in the twentieth century A.D.!

Herodotus knew all about the sheep with the "trailing tails"—tails so fat that these appendages have to be conveyed on little go-carts behind their woolly owner. He had heard of the "savage men covered with hair," the gorillas re-discovered by Du Chaillu long centuries later on. And what wonderful stories he has about these very regions of Tripolitania! Take, for instance, the five young men who, fired by the spirit of adventure, set out from Benghazi or thereabouts through the beast-haunted Hinterland of Libya to see if they could "go one better" than the traveller who had penetrated farthest into the unknown interior. These brave youths were "chosen by lot," which seems to indicate that there were many candidates for this arduous and dangerous undertaking. The explorers were wise enough to take with them plenty of water, and after a long journey across the desert "towards the west"—a significant remark—they came to some trees, and were proceeding to gather the fruit when "very small men" came up and carried them off as prisoners through vast morasses to a city where all the inhabitants were black pygmies and the river was full of crocodiles. The little men apparently treated the youthful strangers

well, for they ultimately returned to Benghazi safe and sound, and declared amongst other things that their pygmy hosts were all of them wizards. Here, then, were the tiny denizens of the swamps and forests of the crocodile-haunted Congo, discovered by these Cyrenians of old, and then hidden from the knowledge of modern Europe until Stanley had to face the poisoned arrows of their malevolent successors. And there on my right is a mound of sand thrown up by some animal round a small orifice in the surface. When I ask what it is that excavates the soil in this fashion, a Turk tells me it is the work of an "ant"—which is indeed quite incredible. But one's mind goes back once more to Herodotus's delightful stories, and how he tells of the "ant" in the desert which throws up the soil all laden with golden dust. The man who is prepared to take such risks for lucre's sake sets out with three camels to the scene of the ant's activity. Now, one of the camels must be a mother-camel with its young one at home, and so doubly anxious to return. On his arrival the camel-owner must hurriedly collect the golden sand and place it on his beasts, but if any movement of the soil indicates that the ants are coming up to reconnoitre he must flee homewards with the

anxious mother-camel to set the pace. Woe betide him if the ants, who are "very clever runners," overtake him! What Father Herodotus was building on here nobody can explain, unless his informant had in his mind that strange nocturnal beast called by an odd coincidence the "ant-bear," or in Dutch "earth-pig," about the size of a small porker, rarely seen, and savage enough when brought to bay. Those of us who served in South Africa will remember the serious risks to our horses' limbs and our own necks which arose from the deep holes of the ant-bear. There is also an account extant of the conveyance to the late Byzantine Court of one of Herodotus's desert "ants," and it is described as "animal mordax et sævum."

After we had made various purchases in the market, and enjoyed a pleasant stroll among the olive-groves—the first walk for walking's sake I had taken since I left England—we returned to the konak. But here we found that a snake had entered our mountain Paradise in the shape of the dreaded cholera. Cholera in Gharian! The idea was almost inconceivable. But there were the naked facts. Four cases had arrived the day before from Azizieh and one of the sick men had already

succumbed.' I presume the medical authorities at Azizieh knew their business, but really it seemed to the lay mind a very unwise proceeding on their part to send contaminated patients to a base hospital absolutely free from the cholera scourge. It is difficult enough in all conscience to isolate cholera cases in Tripoli. The Arabs are perpetually moving about, and will move about even after the premonitory symptoms of disease have declared themselves. It is practically certain that the cholera cases at Zarzis and Gabes owe their origin to camel-drivers and other wandering Arabs from Tripoli. These *chameliers* will struggle on to their journey's end, and then, with the hand of death visibly upon them, throw themselves down amongst their comrades in the filthy courtyards or open spaces of towns and villages. The difficulties, therefore, under ordinary circumstances of isolating cholera were only too apparent. Yet here were undoubted cases, dispatched over that long and rugged track to a place like Gharian, hitherto free from this dread malady. Such conduct seems almost indefensible. The sudden appearance of cholera in the midst of this sanatorium greatly distressed the medical staff. Orkhan Bey and

others came to me and urged me to leave because cholera had arrived: but I told him that I never drank unboiled water or ate the dates or other food exposed to the bacilli of a contaminated market, and so personally had no fears on the score of infection. Nevertheless there were other reasons why an earlier departure than I had contemplated might be desirable. My original plan was to travel from Gharian direct to Xavia—one side of a triangle in lieu of two. This would have traversed a new stretch of country, and one of rather special interest, for the midway halt—it was a two days' journey with baggage—would have to be made at a place with the significant name of Sen, or "The Idol," *i.e.*, I have little doubt, the site of some stone circle or other neolithic monument. But there were difficulties in the way. All the camels at Gharian were employed in the service of the Government, and none could be hired for private use. Again, there were no horses or mules at Gharian which could be used at all, as they were nearly all in the hands of the veterinary staff, which had its headquarters in this mountain village and was doing its best to patch up the poor, ailing beasts for service at the front. Further, even

if I could find a horse, there was not a single saddle in the whole township, and, finally, even if I managed to secure a camel privately and —as I was quite willing to do—marched on foot beside it to Xavia, some 50 miles away to the north-west, such a journey, lying quite outside the beaten track of communications, was extremely unsafe, and no gendarmes were available as escorts. I at once saw the full force of these objections to my contemplated journey, and although I felt disappointed at missing my prospective "Idol," I at once informed Tahir Bey that I should act on his advice and return by the regular route via Azizieh. The good Commandant and his staff were evidently anxious about my expressed desire to explore the new line of country, and even if the details had been less serious than they were, I could not bring myself to worry or embarrass my kindly hosts, whose only thought in the midst of their own trials and responsibilities was for my personal comfort and enjoyment. I made it a rule from the start in this campaign to cause as little trouble as I possibly could to the Turkish staff. When one saw the cruel difficulties under which these gallant soldiers held their own, and experienced every form of personal

kindness and hospitality at their hands, it would indeed have been an outrage to make unreasonable demands. One of the correspondents who arrived a week earlier than myself had been lent a horse by the staff and had "stuck to it," and another had been lent a military bell-tent by the Commandant at Zouara. I do not for a moment criticize either of these gentlemen for their possession of the horse or the tent—they were friends of mine and friends of Turkey too. I will only say that they were lucky to find a staff which would provide such requisites. No other army in the world would dream of equipping correspondents in these respects gratis. All that a correspondent can reasonably expect from an army to which he is formally attached is the ordinary food rations. As to liberty of action, the Press representatives were permitted to do practically what they liked, although the vast extent of the area covered by the defensive forces and the difficulties of transport over sandy tracks rendered it difficult to see as much of the operations as one would have liked. Take one more example of Turkish generosity. In the camp at Azizieh was a gentleman, a British subject, but a Levantine by birth,

who had arrived without any regular credentials from a newspaper but with the expressed intention of "writing a book." He was a man of real ability and considerable information derived from life and travels in India and the nearer East, but absolutely devoid of all campaigning experience and without the most elementary knowledge of military affairs. Despite the fact that he was known to have severely attacked the policy of the actual party to which Fethi Bey is a devoted adherent, this gentleman was shown every courtesy by the Chief of the Staff and even permitted to visit the lines of the Turkish defence. I do not blame him for availing himself of his opportunities. I feel sure he would not abuse them. At the same time I congratulate him on his good fortune in discovering so facile and complaisant a staff as that of the Azizieh headquarters. He may rest assured that nowhere else in the civilized world would an ordinary journalist, unattached to an army by any formal credentials as a Press representative, be permitted to roam at will in the theatre of war—to arrive when he likes and depart when he likes! And I am bound to add that, in the eyes of any one accustomed to the conditions of service in

modern warfare, the complaisant attitude assumed by the Turkish staff towards visitors *ab extra* appeared to extend beyond the limits of reasonable courtesy and pass into the category of a tolerance altogether quixotic and preposterous!

A small caravan was starting for Azizieh in the afternoon, and we resolved to take this opportunity of returning, as one of the camels was placed at our disposal for the conveyance of our baggage. The caravan was in charge of a delightful sergeant, a very superior type of non-commissioned officer, and, I noticed, always addressed as "effendi," even by his superiors in military rank, including the doctors. He understood a few words of French, and said "Bon jour" whenever he met me, even in the middle of the night. This sergeant had a very pleasant way of dealing with the Arabs, and they evidently thought a great deal of him, and carried out his orders with dispatch. We said farewell to Tahir Bey and the rest of our hosts at the konak, and after a brief word with the Italians, including a rather inappropriate "Merry Christmas" from B——, we set off with our faces to the North, and as we went the prisoners followed us with wistful looks. How little had these poor fellows dreamed a

year ago that their next Christmas would be spent in captivity amongst the Troglodytes of the Gharian Mountains!

A light breeze cooled the scented air, and this time our journey was all downhill. Once more at our feet lay the illimitable desert, and again to our ears was borne the faint sound of distant firing. On the way a couple of Arab women met another couple, and all four of them exchanged a number of quick, peck-like kisses. I had never seen this display of affection in public before, and so take for granted that the ladies in question were intimately related. As a rule the women passed each other without even a word of greeting, and almost invariably drew the *feraijeh* over their faces very closely when we approached them on the road. Before sunset we reached the fonduk, but this time, to our dismay, found that the nice rock-chamber was occupied by two Arab families, numbering ten in all, and including a batch of very small children. Even had we been hard-hearted enough to evict them, we should probably have found disagreeable traces of their sojourn there, so in a spirit of resignation and Christmas goodwill, B—— and I took up our position in the next room. The nice sergeant did all he could for our comfort, and

after turning out an Arab who came and lay down at the foot of my bed, I insisted on the sergeant and four of his eight soldiers sharing our bedroom with us. We lit a fire in the middle of it, and then squatted as near the ground as possible, to avoid being nearly blinded by the smoke, for which there was no outlet except the door, and after a meal of lunch tongue, bread, jam, and tea, we turned in. We had been hungry enough to enjoy our Christmas dinner, but, oh, the horror of the Christmas night that followed! The rock-chamber swarmed with dreadful insects, which speedily held high carnival over our recumbent forms. It was bad enough for me, partially protected as I was by the possession of a bed and a sleeping-bag. Malevolent creatures with *vaulting* ambitions, not content with the ground, climbed up into my bed and made sleep almost impossible. As for poor B——, his groans and maledictions were heart-rending. "Oh, this is awful—I hear them jumping upon the valise!" I had given him the outer covering of my bed to sleep in. The hollow cavern was full of evil words, fitful, feverish movements, and spasmodic scratchings. The very thought of Christmas night, 1911, even now produces an irritation of my skin. After an

hour's torment, neither B—— nor the sergeant could stand it any longer, and they got up, collected some brushwood, and lit a fire on the open ground outside, near which they sat and scratched themselves till daybreak. Near them, stretched along a low wall, lay an Arab family—the father and mother in the middle of the group, then the tiny children, and the bigger ones outside. Poor B——, who insists on investing days and seasons with their appropriate halos of conventional sentiment, declared that he felt homesick. He could not shake off the depression of last night's experience. As he said, he could not expect much on Christmas night, but really it was too bad that he should actually have been driven from his bedroom in humiliating retreat on such an evening of world-wide festival. I told him of Mark Twain's remark, that if the fleas in one inn had only been unanimous they were numerous enough to pull him out of bed. I even tried to assuage his mental and physical irritation by saying a good word for the flea as compared with the other creatures who had assailed us, and I told him of Sir Wilfrid Lawson's generous dictum that he had no objection to the flea in itself, but only to the way in which it made its living. But every

effort of humour or optimism was wasted on B——. The contrast between our own miserable and painful environment and all that Christmas meant in England was too painful—the good food, the sparkling wine, the merry nonsense, the clean sheets and cosy blankets. However, a mug of nice hot coffee and some bread and jam was a more effective comforter than my second-hand jokes, and our good-humour was wholly restored when we discovered that Fethi Bey had acted as a veritable Santa Claus by sending us two horses for the long journey across the plain. The good Commandant at Gharian had, without our knowledge, telegraphed to head-quarters and informed Fethi Bey that we had set out on foot, with the result that the two horses were sent overnight to be ready for us in the morning. We rejoined our old quarters at about 3 o'clock, and were met with the shocking news that a terrible outbreak of cholera had occurred the day before. No less than fourteen cases had been notified in twenty-four hours. Out of the very courtyard in front of our old sleeping-room four cholera corpses had been dragged by their feet. It was afterwards proved conclusively that the Azizieh water was not to blame, but that

every one of the infected Arabs had slept the previous evening at a village to the south, and drunk water from the same contaminated well. But for the moment this appalling visitation spread consternation in the camp. The Red Crescent doctors took instant and drastic action. The market, with all its dirty buyers and sellers, was banished bodily to a site farther out in the desert. Both the wells were drenched with permanganate of potash, and all the water subsequently drawn was boiled or filtered, or both. The courtyard of the konak was cleared of its accumulated filth and its crowded groups of camels and camel-drivers. The avenging angel stayed his hand over the menaced camp, and during the rest of my stay in Tripoli no further case of cholera occurred at Azizieh or Gharian. The scourge had ceased as abruptly as it had arisen, and a load of anxiety was lifted from our minds. Those who have gazed upon the victims of this awful malady can realize the terrible significance of the cry of "Cholera!" amid the conditions of an Oriental camp—the sudden stroke of excruciating pain, the vomiting, the blueness of the lips, the merciful coma which precedes death, the hasty, half-bestial interment.

Another sensational event occurred on Christmas Day. When the Italians occupied the town of Tripoli they managed to secure the adherence of a certain number of Tripolitan Arabs who were in the Sultan's service as gendarmes and so on. To my mind it is always a shabby and unworthy proceeding on the part of a nation to employ the enemy's traitors to do its work. I am well aware that we saw fit ourselves to act on precisely the same lines in South Africa, where we paid 5s. a day to the so-called "National Scouts"—in other words, base traitors who had turned against their own country and kinsfolk in the hour of need. It is indeed difficult to justify the employment of an organized force of such scoundrels, and I am grieved to think that our own proud army ever admitted the co-operation of the mercenary traitors euphemistically described as National Scouts. A party of three Italian spies had been cleverly surprised and captured by a Turkish patrol near Ain Zara. When discovered, the trio put up a fight, but one of the number, an Italian, was killed, and the other two made prisoners and brought to Azizieh. These men turned out to be Tripolitan gendarmes recently in the service

of the Ottoman Government and were actually wearing, at the moment of their capture, their blue Turkish uniforms, with the slight alteration of Roman numerals on their collars in lieu of their Turkish badges. A court-martial assembled in Nesciat Bey's room and the two prisoners were marched in, their hands tied behind their backs. There could be no doubt whatever as to their guilt, and they were formally condemned to be hanged. But before sentence was passed the Commander-in-Chief asked why they had violated their oaths of allegiance to their sovereign. The elder of the two declared that he had acted for the benefit of his family, but as it came out in evidence that his Italian pay was no more than he formerly received from the Turks, there seemed to be very little in the excuse offered. The younger man merely said, "I am guilty and have no excuse to offer; I throw myself on the mercy of the Court, and for the rest I pray Allah to grant me His peace." Both the prisoners bore the ordeal of the trial without apparent emotion of any kind. The younger man asked for a cigarette at the commencement, and even when the death sentence had been delivered he continued to smoke in perfect tranquillity.

That evening the condemned men were sent off to the Turkish lines, and next morning at 7 o'clock they were hanged on palm-trees, one at Senit Beni-Adam and the other at Fonduk Bengashir, as a warning to all those who in this supreme crisis of stress and peril might be tempted to betray their comrades, their Sultan, and their faith.

That arch-traitor Hassouna Pasha, Turk by origin, Moslem by faith, and a former servant of the Ottoman Government, had endeavoured also to seduce his son, a Turkish officer, from his allegiance, but to no purpose. The young man went out into the desert and fought with his comrades like a true soldier of the Sultan, until, alas! his young life was cut short by an untimely death, for he died of fever far away in the mountains.

CHAPTER VI

BACK TO THE FRONTIER

BETTELHEIM and Ostler were away at Fonduk Bengashir when we arrived, and Seppings-Wright was just beginning to recover from a bad attack of dysentery. His faithful Selim nursed him most carefully, and he had the advantage of the nice roomy tent lent him by Moussa Bey. Nevertheless I strongly advised him to join forces with myself and leave Azizieh next day. He had already determined to make his way to Tunis for a complete rest and change before returning to the Ottoman Army with a fresh outfit of clothes and provisions. I looked forward with pleasure to his society on my journey westwards. Seppings-Wright bore up wonderfully well against the prostrating weakness of his malady, but it seemed essential that he should get away as soon as possible from the germ-laden dust of the

camp to the clean, healthy air of the open desert.

Thanks to the goodwill of the Arab Sheikh Beroni, one of Seppings-Wright's friends, I secured a good camel for the whole journey to Ben-Gardan for the amazingly small price of 20 francs. Another camel was converted into a kind of portable bed for our invalid, and next day, after interminable delays, we managed to make a start at about 2 o'clock. I made my way to the konak for a few parting words with Fethi Bey, and to my deep regret found him laid low by some kind of fever. I was sorry to part company with this splendid officer, whose manifold services deserve and obtain the grateful recognition of his country. As three Red Crescent doctors told me that there were no dangerous symptoms, I trust that Fethi Bey speedily recovered from his fever. He had already been killed several times in the reckless and mendacious reports of Italian journalists. I have a strong suspicion, too, that on the present occasion my friend's feverish symptoms had been accentuated by the grave anxiety he felt at the news that an enormous caravan of camels laden with flour for the population of the vilayet had been capriciously detained by the French authorities

at the frontier for more than a fortnight. As will be seen later on, we were able within a few days to relieve his mind on this point. In the midst of his own incessant labours and the added burden of physical prostration, Fethi Bey had found time to think of my comfort, and had without any request on my part provided me with a horse as far as Zouara. He also left instructions that M. Gasztowtt, who wished to join our caravan, should be introduced to us by Tahir Bey. The society of this fellow-traveller was a real pleasure to me from start to finish of our journey. M. Thadée Gasztowtt is a distinguished Polish *littérateur*, best known, perhaps, as the author of a unique and most interesting book, "La Pologne et l'Islam." How few people realize that no less than 100,000 Moslems live in Vilna and other towns and villages of Poland. M. Gasztowtt, whose Mussulman name was Seyf-Eddin, was full of real enthusiasm for this wonderful colony, the Western outpost of Islam in Europe. The pioneers of its original foundation had reached Poland in 1306 from the Crimea, and these were succeeded by subsequent parties of Mohammedan immigrants who moved westwards from the same quarter after long-continued conflicts with the neighbouring

khans. The Poles had welcomed their visitors, who on their side undertook gladly to render military service in their new country. Neither party ever had cause to regret the bargain. The Moslems settled down as model citizens and served their adopted fatherland faithfully. On the one hand, the Poles admitted many of the leading Moslem families to the ranks of their hereditary nobility, and in order to guarantee as far as possible the permanency of their new settlement, masons and materials were provided for the construction of mosques, fifty of which are to be found to-day in the various portions of ancient Poland. On the other hand, many Polish Christians served in the Ottoman armies, and at the time of the Crimean War the Sultan possessed two regiments of dragoons and two of Cossacks composed entirely of these Christians whose special flag bore a Cross and a Crescent side by side. These regiments, largely recruited from Russian Poland, provoked the jealousy of the Muscovite Government, and under pressure from St. Petersburg they were finally disbanded by Abdul-Hamid just before the war of 1878. The Moslem and Christian citizens of Vilna and the other towns live nowadays on terms of complete intimacy. The wives and

daughters of the former mix freely in society, and the Moslem children are often called by such Christian names as Paul and Peter. The formal salutation between two Poles is based on the old formula of Islam, "Salaam aleikum,' and the response is, "Jesus Christ for ever and ever." If a Moslem meets a Christian friend he invariably uses the Christian formula; if he is returning the greeting of a brother Moslem he simply varies it by the phrase "Our Prophet for ever and ever." No true disciple of Islam has any misgivings in glorifying the name of Jesus, for has not the Prophet exalted the Teacher of Nazareth far above himself, "because He was born of the Spirit of God"? Christ is actually known amongst Moslems as "Ruach-el-Allah" (Breath of Allah). How few educated Christians ever take the trouble to make themselves acquainted with more than the beggarly elements of the Moslem faith, or read one line of the Koran before indulging in stupid gibes about houris and polygamy! Can any belief, for example, be worse founded than the current criticism of the Turks as religious persecutors? To describe Islam as a persecuting religion is a sheer perversion of facts and of history. The Koran inculcates a complete tolerance in religious matters far in

advance of the theory and practice of the Christian Churches, Catholic and Protestant alike. The Jews have never suffered in the Ottoman Empire the infamous persecutions endured in nearly every country of Christian Europe. The Armenian massacres, bitterly deplored by all enlightened Turks as amongst the worst memories of Abdul Hamid's dead regime, were not undertaken from religious motives; Greeks, Syrians, and other Christians living next door to an Armenian were quite safe in that fearful period. When one compares with the mild liberalism of the Koran the general spirit of the Christian Churches contemporary with the Prophet, and still more those of later centuries, one is amazed at Mohammed's moderation and tolerance. When at the great Christian festivals the Host or the images of the Virgin and the Saints are carried in procession through the streets of Pera, the Turkish troops present arms. This act of courtesy and respect is actually a technical breach of the Koran, which of course prohibits any sort of reverence for a graven image or other representation of the human form as tending to idolatry. And yet in our own enlightened country the Government a few years ago found it advisable to prohibit a similar procession undertaken

by a great Christian Church in the capital of "Christian England." Before we begin to condemn the "persecutors" of other religious systems we might well set about removing the beams from our own intolerant eyes.

The tedium of my journey vanished before the charm of M. Gasztowtt's enthusiasm as he dwelt with pride upon the names of Chopin and Paderewski, Madame Curie, and other distinguished Poles. He was a man of wide reading and great culture and a thorough musician, and his varied gifts had been for years devoted to the new movement in Turkey, of which he was a devoted apostle with a roving commission. Our return journey began with a miserable piece of muddling. Having duly packed Seppings-Wright on his camel, I stayed behind with Gasztowtt in order to secure four days' barley rations for our horses. Our advance party lost their way and roamed far afield into the desert without any form of armed escort. We halted at our old camping-ground of Bir Terin, and I was greatly relieved when two hours afterwards our invalid turned up. We managed to get him a bottle of nice goat's milk here—the only fresh milk I had seen in this country and the only sort of diet fit for Seppings-Wright in his present condi-

tion. Seeing an Arab figure preparing to sleep on Gasztowtt's rugs, I ordered him with some warmth of language to take himself off and sleep outside, when to our amazement the Arab turned out to be my Polish friend himself, clad in a big white burnous, an excellent garment for these chilly evenings. The other members of our caravan party were a schoolmaster from Fezzan on his way back to Stamboul and two Tunisians who had asked permission to join us. The schoolmaster was festooned with cartridges and frequently fired his Mauser at small birds with no effect. Nevertheless, he was equal to any gendarme, as he gave a general impression of active truculence and military efficiency. We entered Xavia early in the afternoon. The Arab Kaimakam received us with great dignity and invited me to sit beside him in the court, which was at the moment engaged with the lawsuits of a large batch of litigants. I recalled to mind the last time I had sat as a magistrate at Quarter Sessions, and smiled at the contrast between the grim silence and decorum of our Oxfordshire County Hall and the charivari of discordant voices which filled the room before me. When a case was called everybody talked simultaneously at the top of his voice—judge,

plaintiff, defendant, and policeman. Heaven only knows by what means the Kaimakam arrived at a decision, but he would suddenly deliver his verdict and sentence and everybody seemed quite satisfied, even the prisoners, who were promptly marched off by a tall gaoler armed with a big key. After an hour of these wranglings I begged the court to excuse my departure and went out into the market square to get some fresh air. Here to my delight I met Mahomet Bey, the cavalry officer from Senit Beni-Adam. We repaired for "drinks" —*i.e.*, Turkish coffee—to a little café, the walls of which were adorned by a big coloured lithograph of King Edward VII. Mahomet Bey was in high spirits, and he showed me a letter from his brother, an officer serving under Enver Bey at Benghazi, in which it was stated that in an attack commanded by the brother in question a number of Italians had been killed and one hundred taken prisoners. In recognition of this brilliant little action the Sultan had promoted the successful officer to the rank of bimbashi, or major. Mahomet Bey was just on the point of returning to Beni-Adam, and was taking back a huge bunch of dates in order to show them to Artif Bey, who had never seen a date-cluster. As he held the

dates in his hand like a delighted child he told me about the hanging of the two men which he had witnessed on 28th December.

An excellent room was placed at our disposal, but our privacy was interrupted by the sudden arrival of three German officers—Baron Dahlweg, his brother, and Lieutenant Baring, a kinsman of the English family of that name. These Germans were most pleasant fellows, and were all "got up" in the most correct military fashion—khaki belts, Stohwasser leggings and—*mirabile dictu*—gloves. They naïvely admitted that they were only journalists "by pretext," and altogether these soi-disant correspondents were evidently not regarded with much favour by our Turkish friends, who probably suspected that they had come to spy out the land and take home some report as to the general prospects of the defence. When I asked them how it was that their War Office allowed three officers on the active list to enter Tripoli during the war and actually act as Press correspondents, I could get no satisfactory reply. I imagine, therefore, that their dispatch to the theatre of war was, to say the least, approved by the German Government, anxious by every means in its power to remove the disastrous im-

pression which had been made on Turkish minds by Germany's failure to render timely help in the present crisis, coupled with her acceptance of the rôle of protectress of the Italians in the Ottoman Empire.

We had originally entered Xavia from the west late at night, utterly weary after a most tedious journey with slow camels. We now left it by the same road in the fresh air of the morning through the mass of tall palm-trees which had looked so magnificent in the moonlight. As some Arabs were tapping the summit of a big palm for *lagmi*, we stopped and bought some of this wine—the natural sap of the tree—which forms, when newly drawn, a most refreshing beverage. It ferments very rapidly, often in the course of a single evening, and in this condition is alcoholic and rather more agreeable to an English palate than before. The Arabs in Tripoli love it dearly, and, I fear, violate the spirit though not the letter of the Koran by deep and dull potations. The prohibition against the use of wine is practically a dead letter amongst the upper classes in Turkey, though still rigidly observed by the vast majority of the poorer Moslems. After the destruction of the Malaxa block-house by the international

fleet in Suda Bay I came across a Turkish Redif wounded in the thigh. He was asking for water, and without thinking I offered him a little of the thin wine of the country. He snatched at the cup, but directly he saw what the contents were he handed it back to me. A little later I managed to get him some water, which he drank in gulps.

The murmurs of the shallow sea followed us throughout our journey to Azilat. The sound helped to make one feel cleaner, and I only wished I could have had time to make a detour and have a swim. At one point Gasztowtt rushed on ahead, and running down to the beach, paddled in the warm ripples. Suddenly from under my feet a hare jumped up and scuttled away—a rare sight in these regions. The flowering plants were already beginning to blossom and the hedgerows were full of the big foliage of croton-oil bushes. A bright flower of the crocus type grouped itself in big purple patches amongst the thin desert scrub.

One fully realized throughout such a journey that Tripoli was for all practical purposes an unknown country. Unlike the Turks, who never display curiosity, the Arab population of the towns and villages on our line of march

always assembled in bands and talked with us or about us, or else simply contented themselves with fixed and prolonged stares of amazed interest. If the ice were broken by a fairly long halt the conversation would sooner or later turn upon the price of our boots, revolvers, leggings, and so forth. If money is indeed the root of all evil, the ethical system of the average Arab must be in a bad way. Considerations of petty finance form a veritable obsession amongst these natives. Camel-drivers will never miss an opportunity of using their monetary difficulties for an appeal *ad misericordiam* and a demand for large *baksheesh* at the journey's end. Listen to the incessant prattle of the Arabs as they sit round their fires in the evening and chatter all through the night—the burden of their talk is money, money, money. Franc, piastre, medjidie, soldi, baksheesh, how much, not enough—such terms and phrases occur in damnable reiteration. A group of camel-men will argue hotly with each other for hours about a minute difference in their pay, realized or prospective. Such disputes form the "teterrima causa" of their perpetual wranglings, and on one occasion a quarrel of this type between our camel-driver and the two

Tunisian Arabs so nearly came to the firing of their absurd guns that Gasztowtt had to intervene. As a Moslem himself, he asked the angry trio if they were not ashamed in the presence of myself, a Christian who had their cause at heart, to show such unreasonable enmity to their brother Moslems. There within a couple of miles lay a warship of the Italian dogs: surely true followers of the Prophet ought to unite in good-fellowship, etc. This timely address produced an instant effect, and the next minute the former enemies were drinking out of the same *lagmi* bottle and chatting amicably together. They are simply a race of Peter Pans—these Arabs—children who never grow up, but not nice children, for all that.

Yes, Tripoli has indeed up to the present been left to itself by the outside world. Who in Europe has ever heard of, much less visited, such towns as Zouara, Rigdalin, Xavia or Azilat? Difficulties have undoubtedly been placed in the way of travellers by the authorities. Even if one arrived at the coast with a *teskereh* or a *firman* itself from Constantinople it was almost impossible for a non-Mussulman to penetrate far into the interior. The usual reasons given for official delays and

prohibitions were difficulties of transport and unwillingness to undertake the grave responsibility of the traveller's security amid the fanatical Arab tribes of the Hinterland. But behind these excuses, which were no doubt valid to some extent, lay probably an *arrière pensée* of a different kind. The Stamboul and Tripoli authorities have long been aware of the alleged existence in the interior of certain areas of mineral wealth, including deposits—so I am told—of phosphates, and although unwilling or unable themselves to develop these resources, they were determined that at any rate nobody else should. The Socialist party in Italy, or at least that overwhelming majority of the members which consistently condemned this foolish and wicked war, has always maintained that the inception of hostilities was due to the *affaristi*, or financiers, who eagerly wished for an opportunity to exploit this very hypothetical El Dorado in the interior of the Turkish vilayet. I have heard an Italian soldier openly declaring his conviction that the trail of finance was over the whole business from the start, and that behind the loud cries of "Viva Italia Tripolitana!" was the silent greed of the company promoter and the Banco di Roma. History does, in

very truth repeat itself. An interesting and instructive monograph might be written on "Finance and War." The lust of gold on a big scale sticks at nothing. The burglar or highway robber does his own maiming and murdering: the unscrupulous financier gets his country's soldiers to do this dirty and dangerous work for him—that is all the difference. The blood and tears of men and women, the accumulated suffering, disease, and devastation of war, count for little when the facile acquisition of vast dividends is in sight. Have we not had our own bitter experiences? The death of 20,000 British soldiers and thousands of Boer men, women, and children on the battlefield, in hospitals or concentration camps, the laying waste of farms and houses, the creation of a bitter race enmity, which, despite the splendid work of our Government, still persists—what were these things to the cosmopolitan financiers who engineered the war?

We had on this return journey, slightly varied up to the present by avoiding Rigdalin, some further experiences of the divergencies which exist between the Arab and Turkish temperament. Never in all my travels have I found a Turkish soldier ask for or expect

a tip, even when he had gone out of his way to render assistance quite outside his duties. But both the Tripolitan gendarmes who were assigned us as escort from Azizieh to Xavia and from Xavia to Azilat were thieves and cadgers of the worst kind. We had brought four days' forage rations of barley for our two horses, and they badly needed it. The poor beast which carried me had its hocks badly swollen, and in order to ease it as much as possible I marched on foot four-fifths of the way to Zouara. Nevertheless, I am doubtful if the tired animals enjoyed a single mouthful of the corn. Every grain of the four days' rations had disappeared next morning, and I am confident that the villainous gendarme under cover of night simply sold all the barley to some equally vile Arab at the fonduk. He declared that he had given the whole sackful to the horses on their arrival, a manifest lie. Gasztowtt and I reported him to Mahomet Bey at Xavia, who promptly had him arrested. Gasztowtt's horse was also in a bad condition. In the far future, when saner councils prevail among nations and the stupid arbitrament of war has been banished from the civilized world, moralists who indulge in retrospective regrets about

the folly and wickedness of former savagery may well include in the scope of their reflections the hideous suffering inflicted on animals in almost every campaign. The advance of a modern army is marked by the bodies of hundreds of dead and dying animals. A great deal of this suffering may be called necessary and unavoidable. During the march to Bloemfontein, *e.g.*, men and animals alike suffered from shortened rations. On the other hand, among a race like the Arabs there is always a large amount of needless and callous brutality.

As the sky was black with clouds and there was every prospect of a deluge of rain, Seppings-Wright resolved to stay at Xavia another day. He had no mackintosh, and a thorough soaking might easily have caused a dangerous relapse. He was making excellent progress towards complete recovery, and I had every hope that he and his faithful "man Friday" would pick us up at Ben-Gardan, and so give me again the enjoyment of his society. But he had not arrived at the frontier post when I left for the coast route, and I can only hope that his delay was not due to any further attacks of illness.

Every town along the coast west of Tripoli

seems to be surrounded more or less by sand-dunes, but those at Azilat are worst of all. When the traveller has become utterly weary of his long, monotonous journey, he finds himself and his beasts compelled to force their way through a series of loosely compacted dunes. If the wind is blowing at the same time an almost incessant spray of fine sand plays upon his face: and when this happens near a town there is always the danger that these particles may convey the germs of trachoma and other distressing maladies. The dust of the Atbara Camp in 1898 swarmed with noxious bacilli, and the slightest amount of sand which got between the lips would probably produce an ulcerated throat.

At Azilat the same old room was placed at our disposal, and we had just commenced preparations for some sort of meal when a soldier appeared with a tray, on which were delicious eggs, stewed mutton, and a large dish of nicely cooked rice. Without any definite idea as to whence the food had come, we sat down and did full justice to it. But in the middle of the meal a strange German suddenly entered the room and introduced himself in French as an artist-correspondent for some Berlin journal. He added that he had arrived

two hours ago in company with Ali Fehmy Bey, a Turkish staff officer, and that he had then given 2 francs to an Arab for the purchase of some meat for dinner, since which time he had seen nothing of money, meat, or Arab. He had, however, contrived to get some coscous from the officers' mess, but declared that he was still very hungry. We of course had no alternative but to invite him to share in our nice, hot meal, though I must admit that our display of hospitality was not exuberantly warm. He had had some coscous, we had eaten nothing; and, further, the meal before us was scarcely adequate for four hungry travellers. Our visitor, however, was very grateful, and insisted on giving me a packet of cigarettes.

I was awakened at daybreak by a muezzin's clear call to prayer in one of the most beautiful tenor voices I ever heard. Before we left we received a visit from Ali Fehmy Bey. This Tripolitan officer was the only Arab on the Turkish staff—the *état-major* in the Ottoman Army forms a separate and permanent corps of officers—and, I may add, he is the only Turkish officer whom I ever found discourteous or inconsiderate. When we asked for a gendarme to show us the way to Zouara, Fehmy

Bey had the impertinence to pooh-pooh the request and persuaded the Commandant that it was quite unnecessary. Another rascally Arab gendarme had secured 4 francs from Gasztowtt overnight for a fresh purchase of barley for our horses, and next morning we found that he had left without giving a grain to the hungry beasts. When we reported this to Ali Fehmy, this wretched Arab, instead of taking the man's name, as a Turkish officer had done in the case of the former thief, was evidently quite pleased that Gasztowtt had been fleeced. In short, his behaviour was detestable. The explanation of his rudeness was not far to seek. He was evidently in a thoroughly bad humour. Other officers had arrived two months ago: this Arab had only now troubled to reach the theatre of war. If only the War Office had appointed Ali Fehmy as Chief of the Staff in lieu of the stranger Fethi Bey! And how dare the Ottoman staff in Tripoli ask outsiders to undertake certain commissions for them when as yet nothing has been entrusted to the illustrious Fehmy Bey?

Our just feeling of resentment against the conduct and demeanour of this indigenous upstart was to some extent dispelled by an

amazing discovery. As we were getting into our saddles we found to our mingled amusement and dismay that the dinner which we had enjoyed on the previous evening had been paid for by the German artist! In complete ignorance of what had happened to his 2 francs, he had asked us on joining our circle who had furnished us with the nice dinner, and I had replied "Le bon Dieu." As a matter of fact, we had rather grudgingly invited the German to share with us his own dinner, and accepted his offering of cigarettes in grateful acknowledgment of our hospitality! I am bound to say he took it all in good part, and we all laughed heartily as we made our adieux.

As the telegraph line to Zouara had been cut by the Italians near Sansur, no notice of our arrival reached the former place. But the admirable Bimbashi Moussa Bey gave us as warm a welcome as ever. Poor Hassan Effendi, after recovering from his former illness, had within the last three days suffered a bad relapse. He looked dreadfully ill and had lost all his spirits. The Greek-speaking Ibrahim did all he could to make us comfortable, and the Slav corporal with the Chicago brother had a long conversation with our Polish friend, who won his heart by addressing him as "my

brother." We slept in our former bedroom, now occupied as a morning-room by the Bimbashi, and kindly lent to us. But, oh, what a transformation! The great hole in the inner wall made by the Italian shell still remained, but all other traces of the bombardment had been removed. The room where I had picked up shrapnel bullets was now comfortably furnished with tables, chairs, mats, curtains and various knick-knacks, which Moussa Bey had managed to obtain from some unknown source of supply. This able officer told us very modestly about his success in repelling the Italian landing at Sidi Said. He declared that his regulars and his force of eager Arabs were quite ready to meet the threatened descent upon Zouara, so long talked about in the Italian newspapers. The whole of the flat coast within the Bimbashi's sphere of influence was effectively patrolled and guarded by bands of Arabs, well-armed and longing for nothing better than a chance of coming to close quarters with the men who threw shells at them from a safe distance.

There were no available gendarmes, horses, or mules at Zouara, so for 2 medjidies I hired a camel, which we might ride when tired of tramping over this interminable desert.

Ibrahim cut me a nice palm stick, εἰς ἀνάμνησιν, as he said, and we set off with the full intention of reaching Shousha in the evening. But the way was long, and at length a startling incident put a stop to our expectations of finishing the day's journey on French territory. As we were approaching the picturesque walls of Fort Bou-Kamesch, we were startled by the report of a gun out at sea, followed by the rush of a shell and the final detonation when it burst. We soon came in sight of two Italian warships, lying just outside the long reef, some 2,500 yards from the shore, which by this time were busily engaged in once more shelling the poor old block-house. The guns used by the two vessels were evidently of different calibres. The projectiles came shrieking over the shallow harbour and burst with a deafening bang. The net result of this second bombardment was almost incredible. No less than sixty-three shots had been fired, and yet not even a fragment of mortar was knocked off the fort! Later on in the evening I found the base of a 6-inch shell. These ridiculous bombardments must be costing the Italian taxpayer a goodly sum! If we take the average price of the projectiles fired on this occasion, the pyrotechnic display

which I witnessed on the last night of the old year must have cost £200 at the very least.[1] And what marksmanship! Here was a great white fort built on rising ground, in full view of the cruisers and within easy range, absolutely untouched by half an hour's concentrated shell-fire! From what I have seen at Zouara and Bou-Kamesch, and what I have heard from impartial witnesses in the town of Tripoli, I can only conclude that the naval gunnery of the Italians is deplorably erratic and inaccurate. One would imagine that they are as "jumpy" on their ships as they are in their trenches!

At five the fire of the warships ceased with the daylight, but their lights showed that they still maintained their position in the offing. We approached the walls of the tumbledown fort rather cautiously, as it was possible that in the gathering darkness the occupants, if such there were, might mistake us for Italians, with unpleasant results to ourselves. B——, who had acted as a scout in South Africa, volunteered to go on ahead and see if any

[1] English shells cost, when loaded, as follows:—15-pounder shell, £1 7s. 2d.; 6-inch shell, £6 3s. 2d.; 12-inch (naval) £29 9s. 6d. In Italy the prices are higher.

signs of Arabs or Turks were visible near the fort. I agreed to this, with the natural idea that he would reconnoitre the position with my field-glasses from the top of some rising ground about a quarter of a mile from the fort, and report all clear by blowing a whistle. I do not know what "scouting" may mean in South Africa, but B——'s display of this form of enterprise was not calculated to impress one. We followed close upon his heels, about 200 yards behind, and suddenly—it was almost dark by this time—we heard a tremendous babel of excited voices just ahead, and in the midst of it the notes of B——'s whistle. His idea of scouting had been apparently to advance right up to the walls of the block-house without any attempt at reconnoitring or concealment. The result was a situation that just missed being terribly tragic. Bou-Kamesch was occupied by one Turkish sergeant and about 20 Arabs, and when the latter saw B—— approaching the walls, they rushed out and were on the point of dispatching him with their knives. This they would undoubtedly have done, but for the timely intervention of the sergeant. B—— had suddenly found himself in the midst of the Arabs, who were tremendously excited by the bombard-

ment, and, of course, quite unable to distinguish one European from another. He could not speak a single word of Arabic—in fact, his entire stock of linguistic accomplishments was the ridiculous phrase "Je suis Anglaise." Further, the recent landing of Italians at Sidi Said had made the Arab guardians of the sand-dunes doubly suspicious and watchful. Gasztowtt, the Tunisians, and I rushed up and made matters straight, and a general "pow-wow" inside the fort took place. The sergeant was very smart and debonair: he wore a clean white collar and spoke to the Arabs like an authoritative but indulgent father. The Arabs declared that B—— had acted like a fool, but very courageously; and their summary of the incident was quite to the point. I told B—— what I thought of such foolhardy nonsense, and that never again would I countenance any exhibitions of South African scouting. Despite his many good qualities, B—— was a great trial on this as on other occasions. He had never been anywhere except in South Africa, and was absurdly ignorant about things in general and Arabs in particular. He could never make any mental distinction between men who were not English and men who were not white, and he claimed a kind of

natural right to disregard the convenience, and even chastise the bodies, of any Arabs who could not understand his wishes or were dilatory in carrying them out. I pointed out to him that there was a great difference between an armed and fanatical Arab on the one hand and a tame Hottentot on the other; and that the doctrine of "walloping one's own nigger" was not applicable to Tripoli. I refused to have my servants beaten by him or anybody else. As it was, his self-complacency and colonial ignorance nearly cost him his life, and his escape from a violent death on 31st December was almost miraculous.

The sergeant and his comrades laughed heartily over the fiasco of the Italian attack, and as the moon had now risen I took a little stroll round the fort to see if I could find traces of the bursting shells which we had seen a mile or so away. The walls were quite unscathed. Here and there within a radius of 300 yards a projectile had scooped out a big hole in the sand, but for all practical purposes the second bombardment of Bou-Kamesch might as well have been arranged by Messrs. Brock at the Crystal Palace! In a copy of the "Matin" for 4th January I read the following account of this incident: "Le

torpilleur qui se trouvait en reconnaissance sur la côte occidentale a tiré soixante obus sur un campement ennemi. Il a mis en fuite des nombreux hommes armés dont quelques cavaliers." This absurd fabrication is a sample of the stuff dispatched by the Italian war-correspondents to Europe. The "numerous armed men" were as a matter of fact the 20 Arabs and the sergeant. So far from being put to flight, the little garrison of Bou-Kamesch simply remained inside the walls and laughed and chatted while the ridiculous gunners on the destroyers were exploding their shells in the neighbourhood. They never budged an inch from start to finish. As to "some horsemen," I can only suppose that this statement may have been due to the fact that B——, Gasztowtt, and myself, with three Arab servants and two camels, after half an hour's rest in the fort, continued our journey towards the frontier in the moonlight, and were mistaken for horsemen in full (but rather belated) flight.

We marched for another hour and a half. The moonbeams showed us the camel track, and the lights of the two warships shone brightly behind the long reef. But by this time it was 9 o'clock, and we had been on our feet,

with an occasional ride on the second camel—almost as tiring a mode of progress as walking—since 8 o'clock in the morning. One of B——'s feet was giving him trouble—an abrasion due to sand inside the sock—and Gasztowtt was dead-beat, so we determined to camp in the open. The Arabs did not like this arrangement and accepted it with ill grace: they looked back with regret to Bou-Kamesch and all the opportunities there for chatter and comparative warmth. What fools these Europeans were to prefer the soaking dew of the evening and the bitter cold of the dawn to the comforts of a building! We rigged up my tent in five minutes, and after a scratch meal slept all three of us inside the tiny structure, made for only one, and small at that. The Arabs curled themselves up along the sides of the tent beside the camels, their burnouses drawn over their heads. Christmas Eve in a deserted harem, Christmas Night in an empty tomb, and New Year's Eve in a little tent pitched on a level patch amongst the scrub of the desert, the full moon overhead and the gentle murmur of the sea in my ears—such were some of my varied experiences at the close of 1911. I was too fatigued to indulge, before the profound sleep

of a healthy, tired man overtook me, in any retrospective regrets for the dying year. B—— talked of the Savoy dinner and dance, and said he had promised to join a party for this festivity next year, though it was only by good fortune that he was not at the moment lying with his throat cut outside the walls of Bou-Kamesch.

As far as I am concerned, I cannot understand why persons should select the end of a year for any special rejoicing. In one of Sir Conan Doyle's books the author tells of a visit to the tomb of Mrs. Pepys made by a newly married couple. The husband gazes on the carved features of the young wife whose bones are crumbling in the vault beneath, and suddenly, as his glance falls on the dear girl beside him, a wave of deep emotion surges over him, and he realizes to the full the horror of human life. And so, in like fashion, as to our mental vision the Old Year lies a-dying at our feet, even the most callous may be touched by some of that *infinie tristesse* which attaches to the lapse of time and inevitable decay. In the chill dawn of 1912 we wished each other a Happy New Year.

The Italian destroyers were still in position, and Gasztowtt suggested that if they began

to shell us I should hoist on a palm-stick a little Union Jack in which I had wrapped my Steyhr revolver. But I felt that the inaccuracy of the Italians was, after all, our own best safeguard, and my only fear was that if they fired at us they might possibly hit Bou-Kamesch. Our last day's march was the most trying and the longest we had encountered. Every other stage in the coast route I had enjoyed, but it was difficult to maintain one's optimism during the latter part of the journey. We crossed the frontier about eleven, and within a couple of hours arrived once more amongst our French friends at Shousha. One of the Arab *functionnaires* was rather tiresome for some time, for I could not explain B——'s calling or purpose, and he merely grinned and repeated his phrase, "Je suis Anglaise." But at length cigarettes and sweet reasonableness told, and telegraphic permission to proceed on our way was secured from Ben-Gardan. So far, so good. But now our trials commenced. First we were assailed by a violent wind, and then overwhelmed by a terrific downpour of rain. The Arabs were soaked in a moment, though they cowered under the camels for some sort of shelter. B——'s old Burberry could not stand against

such rain as this, and he too was soaked to the skin. Gasztowtt gave up the struggle and refused to put on his greatcoat. I alone kept dry, for I wore Gasztowtt's coat and my own mackintosh, and it was by good fortune my turn to ride on the spare camel. Arabs are always wretchedly depressed inthe rain, and none of us were very cheerful. Further trouble arose from the fact that the torrential rain had converted large portions of our track into temporary swamps, and the camels, who, like cats, dislike to wet their feet, trod very gingerly and with irritating caution on the slippery surfaces of the beaten track. Their feet have, I believe, a tendency, if unduly soaked, to split in a painful fashion, and in any case a really bad slip may cause great damage to a heavy load or to a rider perched at such a height.

The lights of Ben-Gardan at last! We had endeavoured to cheer ourselves during the miseries of the final stage by anticipations of nice beds (with sheets!) and a nice warm dinner (with wine!). The former portion of our fantasy came to nothing; for on reaching the curious structure which calls itself the hotel, we learnt to our dismay that every bed was occupied. Bed or no bed, we determined to

eat. Oh, the joy of a table and chairs and napkins, and decent French soup and an omelette and some chicken, and a bottle of "Vin de Carthage" after long weeks of utter discomfort, tinned meats, and boiled mud and water! Such elementary joys—what Aristotle would call "the satisfaction of a felt want"—are tremendously real after a continuous period of existence on a much lower scale of comfort. I have never enjoyed a dinner at the Carlton, Savoy, or Ritz as much as I did that at Ben-Gardan, or as the supper I secured at Aden after crossing the Indian Ocean from Socotra in a native dhow.

As they had no means of changing their soaked garments or drying them, Gasztowtt and B—— sat down to dinner as they were—a dangerous proceeding. Mercifully for all of us, Ben Slama, the excellent Tunisian from Sfax who used to drill the ambulance class at Azizieh, came in and joined us at dinner. Afterwards he most kindly went in search of a bedroom, and came back with the joyful intelligence that he had discovered an empty room for us in an Arab house. Thither we at once repaired, and, after B—— had for the last time lit his beloved brazier, he and Gasztowtt dried themselves as well

as they could, and in moist and steaming clothes lay down on the hard floor, wrapping themselves in odds and ends of blankets, coats, and mackintoshes. What wonder that next morning they were both shaking with cold and quite feverish? They had scarcely slept at all, and ran a terrible risk of rheumatic fever or worse. However, I dosed them each with 10 grains of quinine, and as the sun rose higher they gradually recovered.

The first night of our return to civilization had been, at any rate for them—I had my camp-bed and warm Jaeger sleeping-bag—far more comfortless than any we had experienced in the Turkish camp or in Tripoli generally. We all determined that something must be done, that we could not endure any more of these evening experiences: so off we went to interview Lieutenant Déseveaux, the Military Commandant of the Ben-Gardan district. This officer remembered me from my former visit, and was most kindly and courteous, and when we told him of our sorrowful plight and asked permission to depart for Zarzis at once—where a little hotel exists—he told us that it would be almost impossible for us to embark at Zarzis,

as there were cases of cholera there, and a *cordon sanitaire* had been drawn round the village; but if we would wait in Ben-Gardan for two days, and then leave via Les Bibans, he would be charmed to place a room at our disposal. We accepted this invitation with real gratitude. And when in the years to come I look back on my wanderings in this campaign, and like a satisfied camel chew the cud of my experiences, I shall call to mind the good-comradeship and disinterested courtesy of French and Turkish soldiers, officers and men alike. In fact, I strongly recommend any world-sick misanthrope who has lost faith in his fellow-men to tread in my footsteps: even the most pronounced pessimism would yield before the warmth of the treatment he would receive. To add to their hospitality, our hosts insisted on our dining at their mess, consisting of the Commandant and two other subaltern officers, M. le Comte de Blois and M. Decroix, who appeared to endure the virtual exile of this remote frontier post with admirable good-humour, and managed occasionally to bag a gazelle in the desert or shoot a few quail by way of relaxation. The war, it is true, had made things much livelier at Ben-Gardan,

one of the two gateways through which it was possible to reach Tripoli via Tunisia. The little "hotel" did more business nowadays in a week than it ordinarily did in two months, and vast quantities of provisions passed through the little town on their way towards the east. The whole question of these supplies has naturally caused great trouble and anxiety to the French authorities, and, to be quite frank, they appear to have for some time acted in a curiously erratic fashion as regards the passage over the frontier of food and necessaries. Take, for example, an experience of ours on the road from Bou-Kamesch just before the rain fell. On reaching the top of the ridge which serves for the formal frontier, our eyes were gladdened by the sight of an immense caravan—the largest I have ever seen or am likely to see—1,240 camels laden with flour. These camels had been detained at Ben-Gardan for no less than fifteen days, and then suddenly allowed to proceed into Tripoli with their vast burden of something like 150 tons of food stuffs. I have no wish to deal with this delicate question at any length. But the law of contraband seems fairly simple and well-established. If food is addressed to a belligerent force it is contraband: if food

is sent into a country addressed to private merchants for the benefit of the population generally it is not contraband. I am not prepared to state the exact destination of any of the flour we met on our way, but it is, of course, obvious that there are hundreds of thousands of non-belligerents in Tripoli at any one moment. Not all the Arabs are at present under arms—very far from it—and there are vast numbers of women, children, and old men who cannot surely be left to starve merely because a foreign nation by an act of international piracy has succeeded in cutting them off from all sea-borne imports. Moreover, ships leave the quays of Tunis laden with sheep for Tripoli. Who is going to eat these sheep? Does anybody imagine for an instant that Tunisian mutton will be reserved solely for the diet of non-belligerents in the town of Tripoli? Italy has no conceivable right to grumble and protest because flour reaches the interior of the country as long as she finds means of securing goods from foreign ports for her own beleaguered troops in the Tripolitan towns.

The great procession of camels moved slowly along, for the speed of a caravan, like that of a fleet, is to some extent determined by the

speed of its slowest unit. But its departure from Ben-Gardan had no doubt been timed in order to pass over the more exposed portion of the route during the night. Italian spies had probably communicated the news of the caravan's detention and imminent release to their friends along the coast, and the two destroyers were no doubt lying in wait for the long string of camels, in order to try once more and see if they could hit anything at 2,000 yards. Under normal conditions, the moonlight above and the searchlights beneath would have probably rendered the long line of camels more or less visible, but in that case those in charge might either have risked the possibility of some shrapnel bursting over them, or else, by making a detour several miles inland, have kept out of range of the enemy's guns altogether. In any case, no alarm whatever was felt as to the possibility of a conflict with any landing-parties of Italians. Every camel-driver was armed with some sort of gun. They were required on entering Tunisian territory to deposit all their weapons at Shousha, which looked like the room of a military museum reserved for obsolete and fantastic firearms. All these wonderful guns and a few modern rifles had been reclaimed by the

camel-men on their return, and, armed as they were, they formed a fighting force of at least 1,200 men, more than enough to keep off any landing-parties of the timid enemy.

When B——, in the course of his amazing journey to the front, arrived at Ben-Gardan, he had been most hospitably entertained by a wealthy Arab who owned a good deal of property in the vicinity of the town. But when I endeavoured to find this resident in order that B—— might call and pay his respects, I discovered that he had been arrested and lodged in gaol. The charge against him appeared to be rather vague, but I gather that he was suspected of, and perhaps actually involved in, an attempt to dispatch contraband of war across the frontier. I knew nothing of the facts of the case, and, of course, if a man plays a dangerous game he must take the risks attached to it. Nevertheless, I was disagreeably surprised to find that an Arab of education and position should for a technical and quasi-political offence have been forced to labour on the roads like an ordinary convict. I have been informed, by persons who appeared to know the facts and speak the truth, that in *annexes* like Ben-Gardan, where martial

law prevails, Arabs are practically at the mercy of the military authorities, and possess no right of appeal against any sentence, however unfair or excessive it may be. I was told that the Arab notable in question had been, without any form of adequate trial, incarcerated and then without any explanation suddenly released. If the facts are as stated, I cannot help thinking that even in her own interests and quite apart from ethical considerations, France would do well to overhaul her methods of summary justice in the case of the native Tunisians. The bitterest enmity is at present aroused amongst the Arabs by stories of arbitrary and unjust punishments inflicted upon their co-religionists.

The whole atmosphere of Ben-Gardan seemed to be infected with espionage of some kind or other. Various persons were pointed out to me as spies, and the accused individuals were equally free in their denunciations of the *delatores*. It is curious to notice in passing how quaintly the Arabs use euphemistic terms to describe unpleasant realities. For example, the current word for "traitor" here is "sadik," which really means "faithful"; the word for black charcoal is "arbaid" ("white"), and so on. Possibly there is the same *arrière pensée*

in this odd misuse of terms as underlies such euphemistic names amongst the Greeks as Euxine and Eumenides—a desire to avert the vengeance or malice of evil things or persons by a rather ingenuous species of flattery. During our last lunch at the hotel we were accosted by a shabby-looking person in brown knickerbockers and putties, against whom, as an "Italian spy," we had already been warned. The stranger was exceedingly voluble, and we found it difficult to shake him off. He greeted us with extraordinary warmth as "fellow-subjects," and explained in halting French that he was a Maltese, and that no single example could be found in the annals of history of a Maltese who had abandoned his British citizenship. One felt somehow that it would require no large amount of money to persuade this glib and greasy person to adopt any kind of civic transformation!

At Ben-Gardan I diverged from the route by which we had previously reached the frontier and determined to reach Sfax and Tunis by sea from Les Bibans, in accordance with the Commandant's advice, rather than risk detention at Zarzis. The land journey to the north-west is most tedious by the ordinary diligences, carriages, or *charrettes*. These latter

conveyances, which seem popular in the south of Tunis, consist of a loose framework of wood placed between two large wheels and drawn by a mule. Such vehicles as these are quite suitable for baggage, but their springless joltings are almost unendurable to a passenger, who runs the serious risk, if he becomes drowsy, of falling on one side, being mixed up in the spokes, and so "broken on the wheel." The diligences from Médenine—there is no form of public conveyance from Ben-Gardan to this town—travel by night and are slow and stuffy. If one hires an automobile the cost is heavy: on the other hand, for 13 francs one can travel by sea from Les Bibans to Sfax, and the train brings one thence to Tunis in nine hours.

On January 4th B—— and I left Ben-Gardan with our luggage piled on a *charrette* behind a mule. Gasztowtt was unable to accompany us, as he was waiting for some correspondence at Ben-Gardan which had not yet arrived. But he and Ben Slama accompanied us to the confines of the town and sped us on our way with their good wishes. I was really sorry to lose the companionship of my Polish friend, which had helped to make my return journey so pleasant, yet I had good hopes of seeing

him in Tunis before I left. The distance to Mersa Kersciba was a trumpery 9 kilometres —a bagatelle to us after frequent marches of 30 to 50 kilometres a day. Mersa consists of a single custom-house and a jetty, and lies to the south of a vast sea-lake which is extremely shallow and teems with fish of various kinds, mullet, whiting, sole, etc. The courteous agent of the Navigation Mixte, M. Simon, arrived a little later, and off we went in a sailing-boat towards Les Bibans. How delightful was the soporific motion of the boat rushing through the water with a favouring wind and the warmth of the sun as it rose and dispersed the chill of the early morning!

Les Bibans, reached just within the hour, is indeed a quaint spot, a solitary islet divided by narrow channels from two long and narrow reefs which run out from the mainland on either side and encompass the sea-lake. Here lived M. Simon, in charge of the fishing and the steamships, and lord of all he surveyed—both man and brute. The men were some Arabs engaged in the extensive fishery leased from the Government, and the brutes were chiefly represented by M. Simon's three dogs and a number of pigs, which promenaded freely all over the islet and lived entirely on fish.

The carcasses of the swine were sold to ships and the bacon was said to possess a piquancy and flavour of its own. In various directions piles and brushwood rising from the shallow waters served to direct the fish into certain channels where their presence was desirable: and on the top of these barriers scores of cormorants perched, contemplating the water at their feet, and allowed apparently without molestation to take their toll of the abundant food of the sea. On the western edge of Les Bibans stood the ruins of an old Spanish fort of the sixteenth century. Its walls and broad terrace presented the most solid example of military masonry I had seen since that of the great castle of Gharian, and three ancient guns lay on the summit, melancholy relics of a vanished greatness. M. Simon endured his isolation cheerfully, and showed me, what I knew already, that a good library can go—perhaps not far—but at least some way towards supplying the place of social and domestic ties. This Parisian, "un Robinson avec un véritable Vendredi" (his Arab servant)—so he was described to me—had collected a quantity of good French literature: Hugo, Balzac, de Musset, and so forth; and on the table in the library lay copies of the delightfully funny

drawings of Caïran d'Ache. I was therefore quite happy at Les Bibans during our long wait for the steamer from 10.30 to 4 o'clock. When the little steamer at length arrived, it anchored about an hour's sail from the islet, as the sea here is ridiculously shallow. Another sail, another long delay, and off again in the moonlight over the rippling water. The dreaded Syrtes were in their kindest mood, and, encouraged perhaps by the beauty of the scene, a young soldier on his way to rejoin his regiment told me how utterly weary he was of Ben-Gardan, and with what delight he would meet his *fiancée* again in Tunis. Like Horace of old, his thoughts were fixed on some Lalage of the sweet voice and lovely smiles—

> "Sive per Syrtes iter æstuosas
> Sive facturus per inhospitalem
> Caucasum vel quæ loca fabulosus
> Lambit Hydaspes."

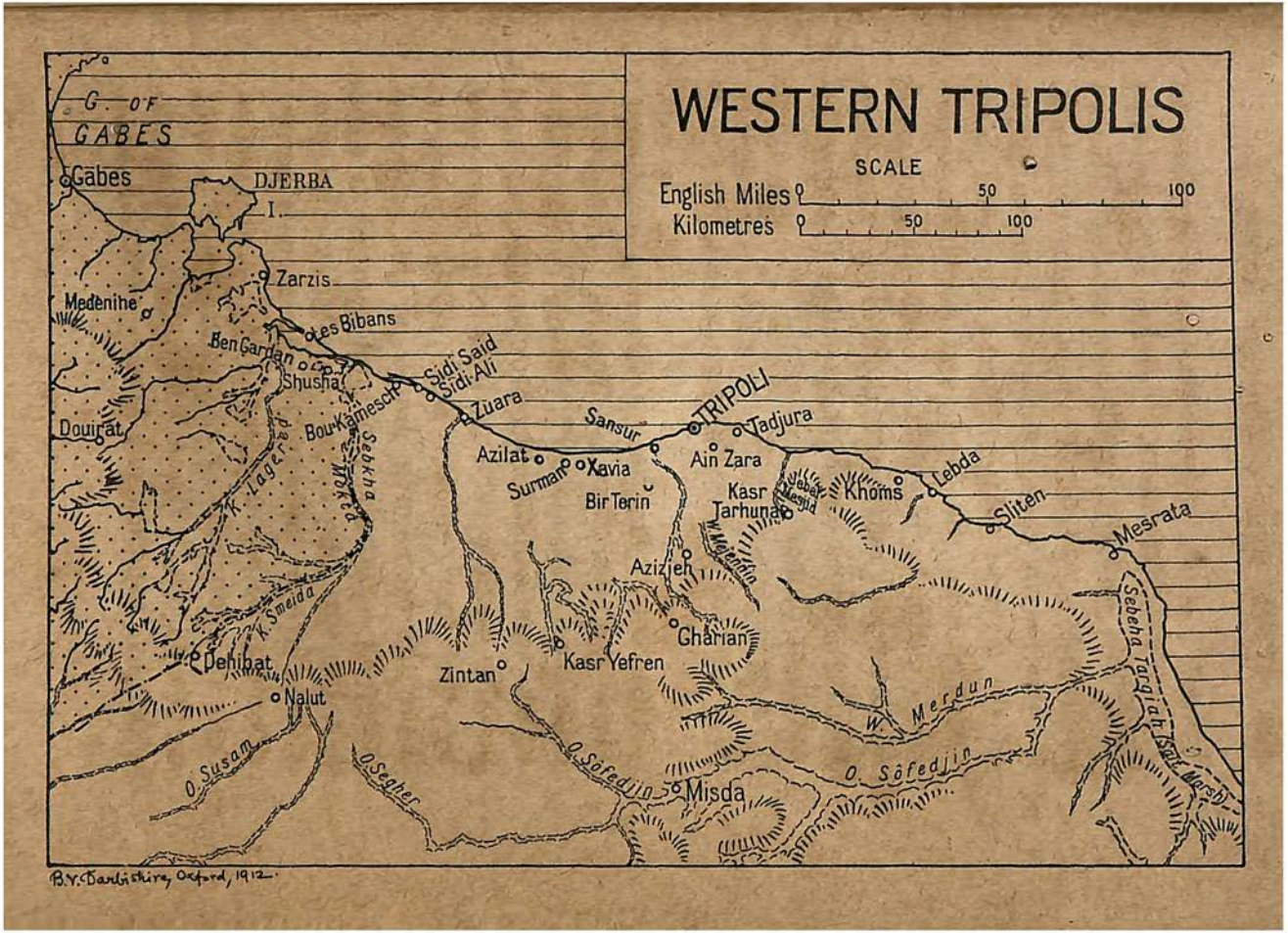
Zarzis, a lovely spot, green with innumerable palms, could not be visited from the ship, as here again was no adequate depth of water within a mile of the shore. Moreover, the little town was for the time being isolated because of its cholera. Djerba, our next calling-station, was also inaccessible in the

twilight. This island—the dwelling-place of Homer's Lotus-eaters, in later ages beloved of Pliny, and the birthplace of two Roman Emperors—was dimly visible from the deck.

Alas for my earlier eulogies on the calmness of the Syrtes! After Djerba the wind blew strongly from the land, and our little vessel laboured in the big seas. These storm-tossed shallows had reasserted themselves, and even the best sailors amongst us failed to enjoy the excellent dinner.

"Ubi Maura semper astuat unda."

One word in passing about this dinner. Here we were in a dreadful steamer—no cabins, no saloon, no "classes," no anything which was comfortable or conventional—and yet the meals served us in a little room used by the four officers were really excellent. Take the menu of a dinner on this wretched tramp of some 400 tons and contrast it with, say, the sort of evening or midday meal provided for us on any of our fast Channel steamers, to say nothing of less distinguished craft of even heavier tonnage. Here is what we found on a beautifully clean tablecloth, with nice napkins and bottles of sound wine,


WESTERN TRIPOLIS
SCALE
English Miles 0 50 100
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G. OF GABES
Gabes
DJERBA I.
Zarzis
Medenine
Ben Gardan
Shusha
Douirat
Bibans
Sidi Said
Sidi Ali
Zuara
Sansur
TRIPOLI
Tadjura
Azilat
Surman
Xavia
Ain Zara
Bir Terin
Kasr Tarhuna
Jebel Mesjid
Khoms
Lebda
Sliten
Mesrata
Azizieh
Gharian
Kasr Yefren
Zintan
Dehibat
Nalut
K. Lagrad
Bou Kamesch
Sebkha Melah
K. Smeida
W. Mejenin
W. Merdun
O. Susam
O. Segher
O. Sofedjin
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red and white:—petite marmite, bœuf garni, eggs and spinach, partridge and salad, a rum omelette, delicious oranges, figs, and walnuts, and excellent coffee. Our great nation does indeed take a back seat in cookery. When I eat a beautifully cooked French meal, even of the humbler order, I sometimes shudder at the recollection of the manner in which the traveller is catered for in England. The stains on the tablecloth, the crumbs which remain from previous meals, the absence of napkins, the awful monotony of indifferently cooked chops and steaks, the wet boiled potatoes, the sodden cabbage, the cup of black and bitter tea, and the shocking stuff railway barmaids call "coffee"—I am amazed that the British public puts up so patiently with the catering of our railway refreshment-rooms and steamer saloons. Possibly they are satisfied, but I am not altogether surprised when I see a man sometimes prefer the unwholesome and inadequate lunch of a biscuit, with beer or whisky and soda, to one of the ghoulish repasts set before him on his journey.

At Sfax I parted company with B——, after making some arrangements for his comfort. His last request was that I should ask the hotel proprietor for a piece of soap.

He was a good fellow, who had accomplished a feat which few men would care to undertake, and had triumphed over difficulties by either ignoring them or securing the help of others who found them less formidable than himself. His plans were quite uncertain, and they changed daily. So I do not know whether I shall ever see this good fellow again. In any case, I have pleasant memories of his unselfish endeavours to help me in everything, and of his tremendous powers of endurance. May he prosper and be happy—Inshallah!

Shortly after my arrival in Tunis I called upon the Italian Consul to ask permission to visit the town of Tripoli. I was furnished with the authorization of the "Manchester Guardian," and my passport had received the "visa" of the British Consul. But when I explained the object of my call the Consul at once picked up a paper from his desk and said that as I had written against the Italians he did not see how such permission could be accorded. I told him frankly that I had severely criticized the action of the Italians in bombarding unfortified towns and villages, and had spoken of the courage and efficiency of the Turkish soldiers and the personal valour of the Italian officers. The Consul was very

civil, and kindly offered to telegraph at once to Rome to see if I might be permitted to enter the forbidden city of Tripoli. He added that he could not understand how it was that while the Government in England was correct and even sympathetic in its attitude to Italy, the general tone of the Press was distinctly hostile to his countrymen. I might have explained to him, but did not, that modern diplomacy is devoid of any ethical basis, and that, even under a Liberal Government, an enormous divergence may exist between the attitude of our Foreign Office and the best spirit of the party by which its Minister is appointed: and further, that in England, more so than in any other country, the Minister for Foreign Affairs is to all intents and purposes an autocrat, uncontrolled by any Committee of Foreign Relations, who makes his decisions and acts upon them without even the form of consulting the elected representatives of the people. I thanked Signor Berodini for his courtesy, and left in the expectation, which was duly fulfilled, that the telegraphic reply would be unfavourable to my chances of entering the town of Tripoli. I had been within a few miles of it for weeks, and had my tents illumined by its giant searchlights, and I

confess I should have greatly liked to "see inside." At the same time I felt I had no just grievance against the Italian authorities in this matter. I had from the commencement of the campaign been in complete sympathy with the Turks in their splendid defence against an unjust invasion of their territory, and I had not hesitated to say what I thought in the few letters I wrote to the "Manchester Guardian." Had I been in the place of the Italian authorities I should have acted similarly. I could not reasonably expect to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. It is only the quixotic Turks who allow correspondents, and even strangers of doubtful fidelity, to visit their lines and, in addition, provide them with free bread-rations and horses free of cost in the midst of their innumerable difficulties. And I can at any rate pay a sincere compliment to the Italians on the efficiency of their Intelligence Department. The Italian Consul knew everything about me before I entered the room: that I had been with the Turks, had passed through Ben-Gardan, that I was staying at the Tunisia Palace Hotel, and so forth. He and his Government are admirably served by an army of spies, one of whom was known to myself as

a person who two months ago was posing as strongly philo-Turk and openly denouncing the Italians!

Thus ended my sojourn in Tripoli, an experience of manifold interest and full of happiness. My heart goes out to the gallant army, cut off from the world, but fighting manfully for a just cause against heavy odds. As to the friends I left behind me in the desert, farewells amid the vicissitudes of war have a significance of their own, for, as Abdullah Bey said, "En guerre la mort est plus prochaine que la vie." Nevertheless, may it be my lot one day to meet again some of my Turkish hosts and enjoy once more the charm of their society! Many of the scenes through which I passed with English and Turkish comrades will always remain in my memory: and sometimes in the midst of comfort and ease I could wish myself back among the groves of Zouara, to look upon the palm-trees flooded with moonlight and hear the murmur of the sea beyond the sand-dunes.

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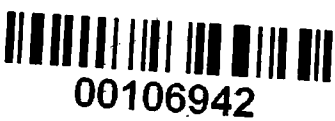

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